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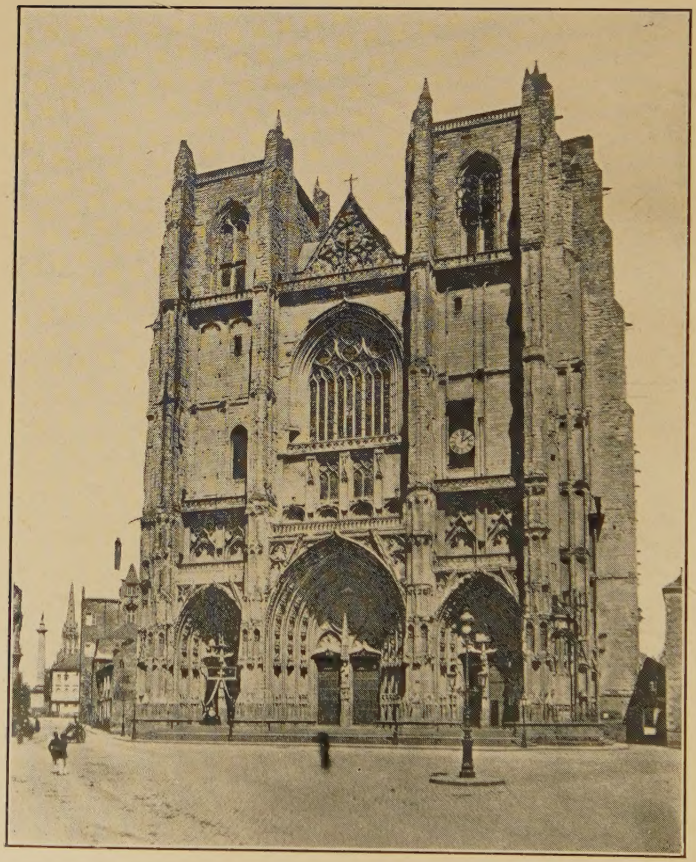
THREE-QUARTERS OF A CENTURY

THÉBAUD



The Cathedral of St. Pierre at Nantes

United States Catholic Historical Society
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THREE-QUARTERS OF A CENTURY

(1807 TO 1882)

A Retrospect

WRITTEN FROM DOCUMENTS AND MEMORY IN 1877—1882

BY THE LATE
REV. AUGUSTUS J. THÉBAUD, S.J.

EDITED BY
CHARLES G. HERBERMANN, LL.D.

VOL. I

POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL EVENTS IN FRANCE

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PREFACE

SOME years ago the Editor presented to the members of the United States Catholic Historical Society the third volume of Father Augustus Thébaud's Recollections, entitled "Three-Quarters of a Century." That volume dealt with Father Thébaud's experience during forty years' residence in the United States. In the Preface the Editor set forth the reasons why the third volume was published before volumes one and two and we need not here repeat this explanation. The former volume was so warmly received by our members that we feel assured that the present publication will also meet with a warm welcome.

While the present volume does not deal with things American, it excites our interest as Americans, inasmuch as it sets forth the early history, the training and experiences in his native land, of a man who became a loyal American and loyally worked for the prosperity of the Catholic Church in the United States. But it has other and more direct claims to our interest. In a lively and convincing narrative it spreads before our eyes a realistic picture of the France of his youth. Though Father Thébaud was not himself a witness of

the French Revolution and the Terror, the early chapters afford a retrospect which shows how indelible was the impression made on the witnesses of those dreadful scenes and how deeply their recital of what they saw affected the generation which came after them. How strongly they haunted Father Thébaud's memory is seen on every page of his account of his childhood. If some of the stories he recites appear exaggerated, we must not forget that he repeats what men had told him whose imaginations had been inflamed and whose feelings had been stirred by the horrors they recounted. But no less engrossing than his backward glances at the great Revolution is the story in which our author depicts for us the time of Napoleon, of the Restoration, and of the beginning of Louis Philippe's reign. His picture of this period is not a political history; he does not relate the doings of the men who governed France in the early nineteenth century. But he tells us in vivid words what were the feelings of the French people high and low, their manners and their morals, their daily life, their religious and political views and aspirations. He places before us a picture of the social ruins the Revolution had caused and of the laborious and earnest efforts of the clergy to revive the faith of the great French nation. He describes the decayed condition of education in France and the difficulties that had to be overcome in order to infuse new life into it. All this is told us, not in the form of statistics and dry generalities, but in a series of personal experiences and of light-giving incidents which appeal alike to the historical student and to the man of the world. Nay, we are inclined to think that they will be greatly appre-

ciated by men and women alike who sympathize with the virtues, the joys, and the sufferings of mankind.

In conclusion we would remind the reader that he will find a brief but pregnant life of Father Thébaud in Father Campbell's short biography prefixed to the third volume of this work.

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POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECCLESIASTICAL EVENTS IN FRANCE

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE

This is not an autobiography. It is a plain review of the chief events that occurred under my personal observation during the period of three-quarters of a century. The insignificant incidents of my life are simply mentioned as a kind of chronological index which will enable me to control my observations and thoughts, as far as my memory can recall them. No thoughtful man could live in the midst of so many stirring events without receiving vivid impressions; and as every particular is still, thank God, quite fresh in my memory, I have thought they might contain some useful lessons for those who will peruse these pages. A few years more, and all this shall undoubtedly have vanished. It is not unprofitable, I think, to put on paper whatever struck me as important in every situation in which my lot was cast.

I was born on the 20th of November, 1807. The Peace of Tilsit between Napoleon and Alexander I had been signed on the 8th of July previous. This was the period of the French Emperor's greatest prosperity.

He was at the time brooding over his projects for the annexation of Spain and Rome, which were to mark the first steps of his decline. Still five years of wonderful success were to elapse before the burning of Moscow foreboded his downfall. But before I was five years old many occurrences made impressions on my young mind which may deserve to be recorded. The first is the enthusiastic attachment of Frenchmen to the great man, *le grand homme*, who then ruled their country. I still feel at this distance of time the atmosphere of admiration for him which pervaded all classes of people. I recollect many things I saw and heard in childhood, and into a number of them the memory of Napoleon enters.

Born in Nantes in one of the oldest streets of the city, in a house at least a thousand years old, I still see vividly before my eyes the ancient oaken stairs leading to the apartment of the next house, in which dwelt the first friend I had in life, Emile Sanlecque. How often I climbed those dark stairs on all fours to look at the crowned eagle which an elder brother of my friend Emile had drawn in pencil on the wall of one of the rooms! Its outspread wings, its deep-sunken eyes, its fierce talons holding the lightning, all struck me with awe, and I wondered when I heard that this was the representation of France. My father was then an ardent Bonapartist, as were in fact ninety-nine out of every hundred Frenchmen. The delusion was to last a few years longer. At every victory there were rejoicings, illuminations, music during the day by the band of the garrison, sometimes *sur le cours*—the chief park of the city; sometimes *sur la Place de l'Egalité*—afterwards Place Royale; sometimes, and one occasion in

particular is vivid in my memory, *sur la Place de Bretagne*. My *bonne* carried me in her arms when I was too tired to walk.

The city was still full of the atrocious memory of Carrier and of his misdeeds. It is remarkable that the government of Napoleon I never destroyed anything which had belonged to previous times, and particularly to the Revolution. The inscriptions and emblems adopted by the men of that short but critical epoch still remained everywhere, and the names of squares and streets were still those given by the Jacobins of the Republic.

I was born thirteen years after the Reign of Terror. The house of Carrier was exactly as he left it at the upper end of the fine street called Le Boulevard L'Entrepôt, where so many of his victims died of the plague before they could be sent to execution, and had not, I suppose, undergone either change or repairs since it witnessed the awful scenes which could be adequately described only by the pen of a Dante. The only one remaining of the trees of liberty, planted in Nantes at the beginning of the French Revolution, was still spreading its vast limbs over a great part of the Place du Port Communeau. It was cut down at the beginning of the Restoration by some ardent royalists, who had to do it at night, as authority had not been given for its destruction. The churches and convents which had been devastated during the fury of the Terror were, in my infancy, in the state in which the mob had left them; but this I shall describe more in detail. In fact, all the crimes of that frightful epoch were still visible in their effects as if they had been committed a short time before. It is not surprising that, although

very young, I was deeply impressed by what I saw. Often after the day was over, when we were all gathered around the hearth—my father, mother, my three brothers, and myself—did I listen attentively to the conversation of our parents, who were speaking of the horrible times which had saddened their hearts during the first year of their marriage. It was in 1794, at the time of the worst excesses of the Reign of Terror, that they dared look for a loyal priest to bless their union. They were true Catholics, and they preferred to brave death rather than to be satisfied with a republican civil officer. It is from them that I first heard the story of the French Revolution. So great was my horror that even innocent people who bore the same names as the chief monsters of the Revolution became hateful in my sight, and I still remember what was my aversion when at the age of seven or eight I passed the shop of a luckless dyer because his business sign showed the name of St. Just, the friend of Robespierre and Couthon. But this is already too long a digression, and many other facts of the same import will naturally present themselves in my narrative. We must return to the First Empire and the impression made on me at that time by current events.

I was not much more than three years old when the birth of a younger brother led to my being sent to school. Fortunately there lived just on the other side of the street a good man by the name of Houdebine, whose occupation for many years had been to teach some score or more of urchins from three to twelve years old. He lived in the third story of his house, but my nurse could easily carry me up and down four times a day. I still remember what an impression the place made on

me the first time my nurse let me down on the floor, in the middle of a large room full of boys, most of them much bigger than myself. I began to cry, when my brother Honoré, about nine years old, took me up, for he had been already going to school there for several years, and brought me to M. Houdebine seated before his desk and presiding over his diminutive kingdom. The old gentleman placed me on his knees, said that Honoré would see to me and not allow me to be bullied. He patted my cheeks and sent me to sit near my brother. Since that time I have learned a great deal more about the French schools at that period than I could then understand. However, everything I learned afterwards only confirmed what I saw. Napoleon was trying to reorganize public instruction in France. The Revolution had destroyed the schools which existed in the country without substituting anything for them. Only baby schools continued to exist during the Convention and the Pentarchy which followed it under the name of the Directory. The National Institute created by the last-mentioned government was limited to Paris, and though several men of great talent were placed at its head nothing of importance could be created by such a mongrel and impotent executive. Napoleon really founded "l'Institut," as it was called, and the École Polytechnique. He soon added to these two great establishments l'Université de France, devoted to secondary instruction (what we would call in America a collegiate course.) Of primary instruction he had no time to think, and the former baby schools continued to flourish in France.

The family of M. Houdebine was composed of himself, his wife and his son, a lad of fifteen or sixteen years of

age, whom I saw only a few times, but chiefly once on a striking occasion, as it will be my duty shortly to record. The good old gentleman did not resemble the schoolmaster described by Dickens in *Nicholas Nickleby*. His mild face is still before me, and I could never associate harshness and ill-temper with the remembrance of the first man who taught me my letters. I remember well the first lesson he gave me. My mother had too much to do to give me any instruction, and probably she thought I did not need any. As to my father, I saw him only at dinner and in the evening, and then he wanted relaxation, and took it good humoredly in a friendly chat with his family. M. Houdebine, my first teacher, when the time had come for my lesson, put in my hands a small book of a few pages called *La Croix de par Dieu*. The first character was a fanciful cross adorned with something like arabesques, and this showed that I was to first sign myself in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I knew this well, and when I had finished this first task, M. Houdebine struck me gently on the head and said, *Bien, mon enfant, tu es un chrétien*. The words still resound in my ears. Then he made me go through the alphabet, and when after two or three rehearsals I reached Z without stumbling, "*C'est parfait*," he said, and he showed me what I had to prepare for the afternoon and left the book in my hand.

My intention, as I have said, is not to write an autobiography. I shall not, therefore, describe the progress I made during my stay at M. Houdebine's. After a year and a half I knew how to read tolerably well, and could hold a pen in my hand. I recollect that during six months I was mainly occupied *a faire des batons*

(*strokes*) *et des o.* But the scene when the son of the good schoolmaster received from him a lesson before the whole class which he must have remembered for a long time, deserves to be described. It will afford occasion to speak of secondary instruction in France during the first French Empire. The boy, who was perhaps fifteen years old, was going as a day scholar to the Petit Séminaire, because his father wished to make a priest of him, although he did not show much inclination for that vocation. He must have previously received severe admonitions in private, but of this we knew nothing. One day he came to the school with a sealed note from the superior of the Seminary. To give the reader a thorough understanding of the matter, it is proper to portray briefly the position of the diocesan seminary in France at that period, that is, in 1811. The Lycées, as the classical colleges of the State were called, being the favorite institutions of the Emperor, had all the privileges which these schools can enjoy, except that their faculties had to follow exactly the line marked out by the autocrat. The Petit Séminaires, on the contrary, were always kept under rigid restrictions. But after the Pope had been driven from Rome and led as a prisoner first to Savona and afterwards to Fontainebleau, the episcopal schools from the fourth form upwards had been deprived of the right of teaching the classics. They had to send their pupils to the Lycées, and the professors, for the most part not very friendly to religion, took very little trouble to hasten the progress of the seminarians under their charge, and frequently left them to their own chances of improvement. But the most galling feature was often the outrageous conduct of the State pupils, who took it

for granted that the scholars of the seminary were of a lower class than themselves, and could be abused with impunity. When the luckless seminarians, who had to come from a distant institution, arrived a few moments after class began, the professor scolded, and the State pupils laughed at those they called the "black asses," because they were bound by law to be dressed in black, and to wear garments not of a very fashionable cut. This state of things continued at Nantes for a long time, until a smart boy by the name of Fournier, who by the by died lately Bishop of Nantes, could no longer restrain himself and cried out one day in a loud voice:

> Moderez, jeunes fous, moderez vos souris,
> S'il est des ânes noirs, il en est plus de gris.
>
> Cease to laugh, young dolts, cease to jibe I pray,
> If some asses are black, most of them are grey.

The grey was the color of the Lycean costume, and this sally put an end to the insults formerly practised.

Surely the position of the young seminarians was far from pleasant. The greater part of them grew bold under the trial, and became the faithful clergy of France who saved the country from complete moral shipwreck, and would have prepared its regeneration had not the elements of disorder been so widespread and baneful. What remained now of the old servants of the Church after the terrible ordeal of the Revolution, when the clergy was purified of the dregs which had formerly disgraced the nation and the priesthood, and had saddened the hearts of all good Christians by their scandals and immorality? The survivors were a decimated body of confessors and martyrs, who still bore the scars of their noble fight, and who prepared the way for the

new generation of God's ministers. I remember well that double row of venerable priests who every Sunday occupied the stalls of the parish church where I had been baptized. The pastor of Ste. Croix, who had spent in Spain the ten years which followed 1791, had gathered around him twenty-five veterans of the sanctuary—all of them exiled in Spain or England during the storm. They were very happy to appear before the people as faithful priests who had not quailed before the National Assembly led by Talleyrand and his compeers. Excited by their example, the young men who were now training for the ministry were for the most part full of a holy enthusiasm for the Church of Christ, and labored arduously to bring back their countrymen to a sense of religion and humanity.

Some few of the young men who went every day to the Petit Séminaire to study for the priesthood, and shared with the others their painful trials, shrank from what they thought degradation, and in their heart of hearts would have preferred to sit alongside of the Lycéans rather than on the benches left for them. There are always craven spirits unable to see where true honor lies; not having mind enough to understand that that which glitters is not always gold, and that under an humble garb there often beats a noble heart, they shrink in a cowardly way from what they think is a disgrace, and try by all possible means to escape from their supposed inferiority and to join the ranks of their avowed enemies. They begin by feeling a disgust for the homely honesty of their parents, and in Catholic countries they invariably turn their backs on the Church of their childhood, and on religion itself. They try to ape the great; to associate with them is supreme happiness. They often

meet with deserved punishment for their baseness; they are cast off by their natural friends, the sons of the oppressed, and are rewarded with contempt by those whose favor they sought to gain by their sycophancy. Fools never profit by the lessons of experience. The chastisement inflicted on a thousand poltroons of this kind cannot open the eyes of their blind successors.

At this distance of time, though I have forgotten many circumstances of the case, I remain fully persuaded that young Houdebine, the son of my worthy schoolmaster, was one of these. The note which the old gentleman read to us came from Rev. M. Delsart, then Superior of the Petit Séminaire. There was not in Nantes a man more respected for his virtue and disinterestedness. He had to live on his own means, and he could not expect any worldly reward from the State officials, who thought his position was anomalous, and the Petit Séminaire an institution very inferior to the Lycée.

It was out of pure love for the Church that M. Delsart had consented to be placed at the head of this episcopal institution. The bishop of the diocese was then the celebrated Duvoisin, who had unfortunately become one of the tools of Napoleon in his disgraceful contest with Pius VII. It must be said, however, that he repented of his conduct on his deathbed a few years afterwards. No exception could be taken to the administration of his diocese. He did certainly all that could be done in those troublous times, and the choice of M. Delsart for the responsible position he occupied was the best possible under the circumstances. But although Bishop Duvoisin was at that time supposed to possess extraordinary influence with the Emperor, it was out

of his power to obtain the slightest modification in the rules established all over the Empire with regard to secondary instruction; and the poor superior of the seminary had to swallow uncomplainingly all the vexations which were the consequence of those rules. Most of the time, it is true, the complaints came from the officers and professors of the Lycée, who thought that the seminarians did not bear meekly enough the humiliations inflicted upon them, and the good man, often perceiving that his boys were, in fact, confessors of the Faith in their own way, could not be very severe on them. Nay, whenever he saw that religion was attacked through them, he could not take upon himself to utter even a rebuke, but was inwardly glad that they were trained by these trials to a life of self-sacrifice and faith.

Occasionally, however, though very seldom, the trouble was of a totally different nature. The complaints came from the prefects having charge of the seminarians on their way to and from the Lycée and during class hours. There can be no doubt that the object of the Emperor in prescribing the intermixture of secular and clerical pupils was to diminish the number of the latter. Perhaps he thought that those who studied for the priesthood were so many taken away from the ranks of his armies; and that the obligation to go to the Lycées was not likely to strengthen their desire to become priests. The fact was that sometimes the dissensions between the two classes of the students discouraged the more timid of the seminarians, who were sometimes led to embrace a different profession, and sometimes the cowards began to despise their comrades, and to seek the friendship of the Lycéans. This was positively forbidden by the rules of the episcopal

seminary, and those students who showed a disposition to associate with the boys of the Lycée were no longer thought worthy of being trusted.

It was for an offense of this kind that young Houdebine had been sent to his father by M. Delsart with the note already spoken of. I will not assert that I repeat exactly the expressions used on this occasion. I have only a general impression of the incident. I see the young man with his roguish eyes, abashed but still undaunted. I behold the father's face unusually severe, even harsh. The word Lycée came certainly several times into his speech and it is the first time I remember to have heard it. Since that day I felt an unaccountable dislike for that institution, dislike which did not diminish when I knew it better. Of these circumstances I am positive. The dislike for all Lycées, which I then imbibed, was certainly due to the words of the old gentleman. So far as I can remember he exclaimed: "Had you, young scamp, any sense of self-respect when you curried favor with the brats that despise you? Do you not know that the only friends you can rely upon are those that follow the same career as yourself? You would like me perhaps to send you to the Lycée, and make a lawyer or a physician of you? I would much rather make you a soldier and even beg God to have you draw an unlucky number and make you a conscript." After this severe admonition, M. Houdebine sent his son to the care of his mother, with the assurance that he would have a private conversation with him after class.

This was the most important scene I witnessed in the school of the good man who afterwards vanished from my life. He probably died soon after. Of his wife

and his son I never heard since I left the school. Soon after this incident I was sent to the school of an old lady situated in the Rue Notre Dame, three or four blocks from home, to which I could walk without the help of my nurse. The reason for this change was never intimated to me; but the many important things that I saw and heard in this new school left the previous ones far in the shade.

The old lady went by the name of Madame Pouliguen; this was not her real name, but that of a town on the seacoast where she was born, north of the Loire not far from Guerande. However, nothing dishonorable to her was implied in this fact; far from it. Before the Revolution she had been a nun, and an inmate of a celebrated convent at a place called Les Couets, a few miles west of Nantes on the southern bank of the river. The history of the closing of that convent was well known to all the inhabitants of the city, and I had often heard my mother speak of it. I repeat her tale in brief: When the decree of the National Assembly went forth, declaring that all religious, male or female, were henceforth free from their vows, the news was received by the inmates with feelings either of undisguised joy or of profound sorrow. To illustrate the former I shall relate a story which I heard towards 1820 from old M. Guenier, then professor of drawing in the Petit Séminaire of Nantes, and living in the same house in the Rue St. Clément, which he occupied at the beginning of the French Revolution. Just on the other side of the street was the monastery of the Carthusians. According to the rules of that Order there were hours during the day when gentlemen friends were allowed to call on some of the Fathers in their rooms and have a chat with them,

or talk of spiritual things, which was certainly the idea of St. Bruno when he made his Rule. M. Guenier, who was then a young painter of religious subjects, and became afterwards an artist of some repute, in his leisure time used to go and spend hours with some of the monks. It was a very pleasant place which I knew well in after life, as the monastery was not destroyed. The cottages of the Carthusians, however, were, in my time, rented to persons who wished to enjoy the *rus in urbe*. The house was just outside of Nantes. During the last sickness of my mother, by the advice of her physician, she was removed to one of these cottages and died there a year after. Each cottage had two stories and contained at least six or seven apartments, including a kitchen and dining-room, and all around it a small garden produced an abundance of flowers and fruits.

It was in this attractive spot that the young painter had spent many delightful hours, when the decree of the National Assembly sent adrift the Carthusians as well as the nuns. I have no positive information of what became of the monks. The Rule of St. Bruno, I think, prescribed that eighteen monks and no more should dwell in each monastery, and I do not know whether this number was complete in their house at Nantes at the time of the dissolution. But of one of these inmates I can speak positively.

The monks, M. Guenier said, left their house in the course of the forenoon, and one of them, only one, whom he had often visited, came to his house, and appeared highly elated at his being liberated from his cell. He was, of course, well received, and a long conversation ensued, of which I did not learn the particulars.

The ex-monk, who remained until the bell rang for dinner, as he entered the painter's house had sniffed the smell of the meal to come. "At last," he exclaimed, "I shall have a taste of meat!" "I beg your pardon," replied the host, "I have ordered the cook to prepare some good fish for you, because I do not want you to break your vows in my house."

But Madame Pouliguen did not fail like the Carthusian. Not a single nun of her convent even faltered on the day of trial. They had already received several invitations from the new municipal authorities of Nantes, "to enjoy the freedom granted them by the glorious National Assembly, to escape from their slavery and become at last free citizenesses of the French nation." They had meekly answered that "they did not wish for any happier lot than that of nuns. They had vowed to live and die in their convent, and with the grace of God they would fulfil their vow." This appeared strange to the officials, who in the United States would rank as mayor and alderman, and who were then called, I think, *Le Directoire du Département de la Loire Inférieure.* Deputies were sent to persuade the nuns that it was better for them to obey the summons to leave. The deputies came back with the answer that the nuns were obstinate.

Then the members of the *Directoire* conceived a brilliant idea. It would not do to send soldiers after the nuns and expel them by force of arms. More appropriate means could be found to obtain the desired result. There was in Nantes a body of old hags known as *les poissardes*—the fish-women established from time immemorial at the end of the bridge called *Le Pont de la Poissonerie.* They were asked by the *patriotes* of

Nantes to come to their assistance and engage in an expedition well becoming them and useful to the city. I will not calumniate the whole tribe of fish-selling females then living in Nantes. I have known many of them in after life, and I would have trusted them with my purse, if not with my secrets. They were certainly selling fine salmon and shad from the Loire, splendid carp from the Lac de Grandlieu, delightful oysters from the *pays de Retz,* and luscious sardines from the neighborhood of Vannes and of Guerande. Many of them were too honest to listen to the enticing plea of the Nantes authorities. Still a number of the ladies could not resist the temptation of undertaking this expedition, which at the time appeared amusing to them, but which in the end became the shame of their lives. They were to go in a body to the convent of Les Couets, and drive out the nuns with whips. The plan was carried out. I will not attempt to describe the details. The fish-women had been provided with thongs. Escorted by the police they forced their way into the convent and compelled the nuns to leave their peaceful retreat, and seek a precarious living in a cold and unsympathetic world.

When I was a boy and wished to enjoy the sight of fat rays and lampreys, of lively lobsters and plump *crevettes* fresh from the ocean, I walked all the way from home to the fish market. If I saw there an old emaciated woman, cursing and raging, the picture of bad humor and the pattern of ugliness, I often inquired from a young and fresh-looking girl at a stall in the neighborhood, who that wrinkled and ill-featured woman was. The answer was invariably, "*Oh! Monsieur, c'est une fouetteuse des Couets.*" (Oh! Monsieur, she is one

of the women who flogged the nuns.) This was enough.

Madame Pouliguen was one of the ladies thus forced to leave her convent. She could not keep her convent name. Imagine her answering to a ruffian asking her what was her name, "Citizen, I am Teresa of Jesus," or "Mary of Carmel," or something similar. In Nantes during the two years of the Terror this would have been enough to secure for her a *marriage républicain*, and a *noyade* in the Loire, or at least a cell in the Bouffey or a l'Entrepôt until she had died of typhus. She would not, however, take back her old family name, as she had renounced it forever when she became a religious; she took the name of her birthplace and thus she became Madame Pouliguen; as we would say Mrs. New York, or Mrs. Yorkville, or better still Mrs. Bridgeport. She had no other resource but to teach a school, and she had been at it already from 1791 to 1811 when I became one of her pupils.

The room where she kept her school was more airy and sunny than that of M. Houdebine, and there were on the walls several religious prints, which she had probably nailed there after the concordat between Pius VII and Napoleon. There was in particular a picture of St. Bruno hung up over the mantelpiece, before which the little girls of the school knelt, and joining their little hands and bending their little heads formed a pleasing picture before that of the saint. The little girls outnumbered the boys in the school of Madame Pouliguen. As to the lady herself, there was on her face a deep shadow of permanent grief, totally unmixed, however, with harshness and repulsiveness. I see her still before me with her sweet eyes and long-drawn

features. She lived in complete retirement except when she was surrounded by the children to whom she taught their letters. M. Houdebine, at least, took his meals with his wife and son; Madame Pouliguen took them alone. Every day a quarter before twelve, when we were about to be dismissed for dinner, a young waitress from a neighboring restaurant brought in a small but neat basket, and passing noiselessly through the classroom went to an interior apartment where the poor lady slept and where she ate by herself. On some occasions when the little waitress left the door ajar I peeped from my place into the inner room, and could see several small dishes come out of the basket: a little bowl of soup, without which a French man or woman cannot dine, a diminutive slice of meat, or a little fish on days of abstinence, and a couple of ordinary apples or pears in which the country abounds; this with a tiny roll of white bread composed the fare of the ex-nun.

My mother brought me to this schoolmistress during class hours. There was not even a stir among the children, as most of them were little girls, very quiet and orderly. Madame Pouliguen examined me with great kindness, and in a few words, she expressed pleasure that I was so well advanced for my age. She told my mother that she would herself find a French grammar for me—the small one of Restaut, and an arithmetic—probably the short one of Bezout; I do not exactly remember. But she added: "The little boy can read well; procure for him, Madame, *une Bible de Royaumont*." This short phrase was the making of me, as a Christian, I mean, as will presently appear, for it is not to be denied that there was some

Jansenism in the book; but good Madame Pouliguen was altogether innocent of it.

A place was assigned me on a small bench near one of the two windows which lighted the room. I never left my seat, except half an hour for a lesson in writing every day, and whenever the schoolmistress called me to her to have me recite my lessons. From my seat on the bench I could see *la Rue Notre Dame*, an old and narrow thoroughfare winding up towards the Place St. Pierre, on which it abutted. But what chiefly attracted my attention in it was an old and very tall blackened wall at the foot of which a blacksmith was all day long striking with his hammer on an anvil. I could not see the man, as he was on the other side of the wall; but I could hear him too well, as he gave me a great deal of annoyance until I became accustomed to his noise. This was a strange blacksmith's shop and my curiosity was soon excited to know what it meant. I had not been a week at the school of Madame Pouliguen when the explanation came to me partly from my own observation, partly from my mother in answer to my questions. One day I went home by a roundabout way, and soon found myself face to face with the blacksmith, and in the midst of extensive ruins which went as far up as the Place St. Pierre. Several hundred feet square were covered with débris; stones, pieces of timber partially burned, heaps of mortar turned to dust; no bricks, because none are used in the country, but plenty of pieces of slate, of laths, of limestones and mouldering plaster. At the end of this scene of confusion stood the son of Vulcan, forging away, without even noticing me. I did not feel courage enough to go and ask him what all this meant, and had I then known

that this had been a splendid church twenty years before, I would have run away from him as from the devil.

The ruins had remained in that state from the day of demolition. Not only had no effort been made to rebuild the edifice during the country's prosperity, at the time of the greatest splendor of Napoleon's reign, but the poor people of the neighborhood had not dared to come and gather the lumber which they could have used for firewood, nor to take away in wheelbarrows the best stones remaining on the spot, to sell them or use them for their own convenience. The Vandals of the Revolution had passed and blasted the holy place, and apparently no one dared to touch the ruins, lest they should share in the crime.

Unable to understand what appeared to me a mystery, I ran home and told my mother what I had seen, asking her what it could mean. "My dear Gus," she answered, "it was the church of Notre Dame, which gave its name to the street where you are now going to school. There are many other churches in the city in exactly the same state, and by and by you will see their ruins also, and I will have the same story to tell you. Those bad men, of whom you have often heard me speak with your father, demolished that fine church where I had gone so often to pray when I was a girl." And suddenly she stopped, because tears were coming to her eyes. I never could obtain from her any details of those horrible deeds. She mentioned them in general, but never named any of the men who had been guilty of such crimes.

The fact was, that during the Reign of Terror, Nantes was at the mercy of the vilest rabble, under the leader-

ship of Carrier, who was the vilest of them all. History has preserved the names of some of them, and it is unnecessary to mention them here. My mother's words made a deep impression on me. I was perfectly bewildered; and whenever afterwards, from my bench in the schoolroom near the window, I looked at the blackened wall, which remained standing at least twenty feet high; whenever I heard the hammer of the blacksmith falling heavily on his anvil in the holiest part of the former sanctuary, I asked myself how there could have been Frenchmen capable of such excesses.

I soon became extremely interested in the reading of the Bible history suggested by Madame Pouliguen, and what I read increased my horror for anything done against the majesty of God, and consequently for the anti-religious ruffianism of those times. The history of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, is surely the best book to place in the hands of a child to instil in his mind and heart the deepest veneration for the Creator and future Redeemer. The wonders of Creation; the punishment of the first sin; the destruction of nearly the whole human race by the Flood; the history of the patriarchs, all so profoundly impressed me with the idea of God's greatness; the wrath of heaven against the impious and the idolators so often recorded in those sublime pages; the honor rendered to the Almighty by pious kings, prophets, and holy priests; the gorgeous description of the Tabernacle first, and afterwards of the Temple; the stern retribution sure to follow sacrilege, exemplified particularly in the history of Oza and of Heliodorus; a multitude of circumstances related everywhere in the records of the Old Testament, are certain to make a deep impression on

ch ldren, sure to remain for life, and to form a substantial basis for an enduring religious feeling and faith. I therefore have always blessed the woman who was instrumental in enabling me when so young to peruse the whole of this entrancing history. To be sure, the "Bible of Royaumont," as it was called in France, had come from the workshop of the Jansenist sect; but the venom was better concealed in it than perhaps in any other book from the same source.

It could scarcely be discovered by adults in the "Reflections" which followed each chapter. Had I read them all attentively I could not have been poisoned by the virus. But I never read them, and was satisfied with my own reflections. I think that on two or three occasions I attempted to go through some of them, but found them so dry that I passed directly to the next chapter, which, I was sure, would be much more interesting. In the first six months of my attendance at Madame Pouliguen's school I went twice through the book, including the short account of the New Testament, but omitting the author's "Reflections." My faith was thus settled for life.

The men of the last century who had lost the precious gift of holy Faith by their own fault and wished to spread their unbelief throughout the French nation, thought that the best means of reaching their end was to revile the Bible and prevent Frenchmen from placing even a simple Bible history in the hands of their children. They succeeded too well; that very book called the "Bible of Royaumont," which every French child read formerly, of which De Maistre, I think, says that it was the first book he had read, was already unknown in French schools in my childhood. At most it was

considered to be a book of nursery tales for children. However, I read it with the deepest interest, to the accompaniment of the blacksmith's stroke. When I came to the history of Heliodorous, beaten almost to death by angels, to punish him for his sacrilegious intention to rob the Temple of its treasure, how I wished the same punishment inflicted on that begrimed and ear-deafening monster and devil of a blacksmith! If he had not been one of those who had pillaged this edifice, and put the plunder in their pockets, he had at least profited by the sacrilege, and was at the moment making his living by the profanation of the holiest part of this temple of God. For I had remarked that the blackened wall near which he forged his iron was the apse of the former church, and his anvil stood on the very spot where the altar had been reared.

I remained in school after the other children that day and detained good Madame Pouliguen a moment from her dinner, telling her I had a question to ask her. "What is it, little Gus?" she said, as soon as the room was empty. "I want to know," I answered, "why that blacksmith is allowed to work just where the altar of Notre Dame was. Is it not awful?" The sorrowful schoolmistress had probably never heard such a question from any of her other pupils; at first she appeared to hesitate. She had passed through so many awful scenes that she had acquired the habit of extreme caution; and often did not know whether to open her heart even to a child. Taking me in her arms she said, "What is it that appears so dreadful to you, my dear child?" "Madame," I replied, "I find it very dreadful that bad men should have destroyed a church so near your school years ago, and that after so long a time a

man should continue to batter an anvil in the sanctuary. Could you not stop him?" At these words the poor lady melted away; she kissed me with great tenderness and said: "Alas no! I cannot stop him. You see, little Gus, that everything remains exactly as it was left on the day the church was destroyed. The bad days are not over. I do not expect to see any change for the better; but try to live long and you may see better things." When she kissed me at parting, I remarked that her cheeks were moist.

The words of the ex-nun forever after appeared to me important to rightly judge of Napoleon's policy. This preservation of what the Revolution had done, this dread of even touching the ruins it had made, and of restoring the slightest symbols of monarchy and religion, have always seemed to me among the most sorry spots of the Napoleonic ideas, as they are called. The great Emperor had been a Jacobin when young, and there was in him something of the Jacobin all his life. Thus, during the whole of his reign the city of Nantes, and the same is true of other French cities, remained in the same condition as at the end of the Reign of Terror. Inscriptions, ruins, names of streets, profaned sanctuaries which had been turned into hay lofts, carpenters' shops, barracks, and worse still, dens of vice, remained unaltered. As I advanced in years I saw that Napoleon never repaired any of the material evils done by the Revolution. He checked the political excesses of that epoch, and established his despotism on the ruins of popular lawlessness; he opened the churches that had not been destroyed by the mob, and restored to religion what remained after ten years of Vandalism. In Nantes, at that time a city of ninety thousand souls, five churches

were restored to Bishop Duvoisin, but there was no hope of reopening a single religious house. I presume that no other city was better treated than Nantes. This is all he did for religion; and yet it was a great deal, because he could not do even so little without restoring the hierarchy, and allowing the cassock of the secular clergy to reappear. Still, this was only a fragment of what religion had been in France before the Reign of Terror.

That his government left things just as the Revolution had made them is largely true not only of buildings and material objects, but likewise of men and institutions. To expect him to open courts of law for the trial of the ruffians who had set all human and divine laws at defiance would have been entirely wrong, because a complete restitution would have been absurd; it could not have healed the wounds of France. But the new autocrat was not justified in making many of these revolutionary leaders his favorites and ministers, and filling his court with men who were stained with the blood of the best people of France, and particularly notorious for their violent and consistent hatred of religion. It is true, he required of them a certain degree of public decorum; but everybody knew that they were not changed in sentiment, and if the same opportunity had presented itself they would have acted as before.

Moreover, there are some crimes so outrageous that their authors should disappear morally, if not physically, in any well-ordered commonwealth. In all the great cities of France, at that time, there were some men whose very sight could not but stain the imagination and corrupt the hearts of the people. But these retained

all the rights of citizens and were allowed to insult all classes of the community by their presence and speech. Would it not have been possible, if not to send them to the gallows, at least, to keep them in seclusion or drive them into exile? An example or two will enable the reader to judge of my meaning and to understand the truth of the ex-nun's remark. I still remember how a very ugly and repulsive-looking man was often pointed out to me, when, as a little boy, I went to school in the Rue Notre Dame. His name was Neyron. The name is not fictitious. This is not a novel; my characters were known by the names they received in these pages. Neyron was all his life a *charcutier;* that is, a retailer of pork. In France this business is altogether distinct from the butcher's trade. He was an ardent Jacobin during the reign of Carrier, and to prove it he extended his business in a manner which my readers will find it difficult to believe. The historians of the first French Revolution are often forced to heap horrors on horrors; but they would consider it as inartistic to sully their narratives with many details which, however, are historically correct. As to the truth of the present story the whole city of Nantes in my boyhood was ready to swear. Everybody, pointing at the man the finger of scorn, called him "*un mangeur et vendeur d'oreilles,*" and he never prosecuted any of his accusers as slanderers. They related, in short, that he had made a bargain with the executioners of Carrier, to furnish him every day a certain quantity of human ears cut off from the heads of those who were executed. These, they said, he retailed to his customers, and partook of them himself at his breakfast. I relate merely what I have heard many a time. Was it proper, I ask, to allow this relic

of the Revolution to parade publicly in the streets of the city he had disgraced?

Another example worthy of record is that of the notorious Chau, who was permitted to live and die boasting of his misdeeds, and of whom a great deal more must be said, not on account of his low, though remarkable individuality, but chiefly because of the Vendeans, whose fierce enemy he was all his life, hating that greatness of soul which distinguished them and which ought to be enshrined in these pages, to the glory of France.

It was principally because the Vendeans, in the neighborhood of Nantes, were in open insurrection against the new republic, that Carrier was sent by the Convention to tyrannize over that city. Who were the Vendeans and of what did they complain? I knew many of them personally when a boy.

The Vendeans were farmers, living in the Bas Poitou, the Bocage, and the *pays de Retz;* the whole district extending east and west, from the neighborhood of Poitiers to the shore of the Atlantic Ocean, south of the river Loire. They were people of great good sense, who had a strong attachment to their religion, and who were, to my knowledge, never given to any superstitious practices. They did not deserve the name of fanatics which has been liberally bestowed upon them by writers. The whole country was afterwards called Vendée from one of the miniature rivers which intersect and beautify that peaceful country. When the Revolution began, they took no part in its excesses, but did not oppose the movement. They were not, however, to escape the violence of the political tornado. It soon came sweeping along, and obliged them to show their colors.

The Constituent Assembly undertook to frame a

"civil constitution of the clergy." The very name showed the absurdity of the attempt. A decree, however, tried to enforce it, and to compel all bishops and priests, having the charge of parishes, to bind themselves by a solemn oath to follow its schismatical orders. Very few of them obeyed; the immense majority thought themselves bound in conscience to refuse to take the oath, and were in consequence deprived of their churches and of their revenues. Constitutional bishops and constitutional *curés*, who did not scruple to take the oath, were soon appointed; but the people in La Vendée at least, did not want them and wished to keep their old pastors. This happened as early as November, 1790, about eighteen months after the first meeting of the States-General.

The refusal of the people in La Vendée to adopt the new ecclesiastical polity was so universal, and contrasted so completely with the otherwise peaceful attitude of the inhabitants, in the midst of the political and social storm which was already raging throughout the rest of the country, that the Assembly in Paris thought proper to send two commissioners to inquire into the matter, and ascertain what ailed the good people of that Arcadian district. Gallois and Gensonne were appointed; the latter afterwards became celebrated as a Girondin, but he, as well as his colleague, was unknown at the time. Their report, presented in October, 1791, to the Legislative Assembly, which had lately succeeded to the Constituent, deserves to be read entire and can be found in Thiers' *History of the French Revolution*. It condemns the clergy of the district because they would not take the oath; but no fault is found with the people, who were not swayed in their opposition by political

motives, but only by what appeared to the commissioners unaccountable scruples of conscience. The peasants declared themselves ready to obey every other law, provided this one were not forced upon them. To compensate for this exemption they offered to pay double taxes.

This is the true story of the origin of the insurrection in La Vendée. At the beginning of 1793, however, the judicial murder of Louis XVI sent a thrill of horror through the honest souls of these simple farmers; and they took up the royal cause just after the king had been put to death. Henceforth they were opposed to republican France in politics, as they had been before in religious feeling.

Everybody is familiar with the vicissitudes of that heroic struggle which Napoleon I afterwards called a "War of Giants." I shall only refer to the odious form which the struggle assumed in the city of Nantes, after Carrier was sent there in October, 1793. This struggle was witnessed by my father and mother, directly before and after their marriage. But it is not only from their lips that I heard the horrible recital. Many others told me in my youth of the indelible impression made on their minds and hearts by what they had seen; and there is no exaggeration in saying that seldom has human cruelty taken so abhorrent a form.

The monster who bore the name of Carrier had been dispatched with the general instruction "to put an end to the Vendean war by measures of terror and destruction adequate to the object in view." The terms were as comprehensive as he could wish; and whatever he did could have easily been shown to have been within

the lines of his instructions. Consequently, when, after six or seven months of the most atrocious tyranny, he was called back by Robespierre, who thought that he was going a little too far, he took his seat again in the Convention, glorying openly in his misdeeds, and, when, after the downfall of his chief in Thermidor, he himself was called to an account, he never lost his assurance, but was, on the contrary, confident of an acquittal, because, as he said in his speech before the Assembly, "If I deserve punishment, everyone here is guilty even to the President's bell." Cited before the Revolutionary Tribunal, his trial lasted two months, and revealed to the world a cruelty well known to the citizens of Nantes, but only vaguely understood by the rest of France. A few words on this loathsome subject must suffice.

The horrors perpetrated in La Vendée by the republican armies, before the arrival of Carrier, are almost incredible. Still, history records similar devastations, such as the campaigns of Cromwell in Ireland. However true soldiers feel an instinctive repugnance to destroy life except on the battlefield, the "infernal columns," as the banditti were called, must have rejoiced when they heard of the new plans devised by the Convention. They were ordered to use fire and sword to destroy a harmless population of women and children. The people of La Vendée were doomed to perish by the hands of the executioners of Carrier. Henceforth the chief work of the republican troops was to conquer the "rebel" armies at the point of the sword, and to send crowds of Vendeans of every age, condition and sex, to the city on the Loire formerly so beautiful and now to be transformed into a butcher's shambles.

A tribunal had been established to judge the "brigands," as the unfortunate victims were called. But although it labored rapidly enough, and every day a multitude were sent to death, after only a mock trial, Carrier found its work too slow. Before long the inmates of the prisons were sent to the slaughter in troops, without even ascertaining their names or identity.

Of these prisons, it would have been difficult in my youth to find out the number. Old convents and churches were often used as jails; and occasionally when an unusual number of victims arrived suddenly from the country, they were packed into whatever public building was empty at the moment. But beside the old prison of the Bouffey, now demolished, but still standing grimly on the banks of the river when I was a young man, with its long rows of gloomy cells that had witnessed scenes whose description made the blood curdle in my veins, there was the immense barracks of L'Entrepôt, which threw in the shade all other prisons. In after times scarcely any place but the Entrepôt was mentioned. It had been built originally partly as an adjunct to the custom house, for the purpose of keeping merchandise in bond—Nantes had been a great commercial city—and partly as an immense granary where the city's provisions were kept according to ancient custom. In those vaults was stored the salt manufactured on the seacoast of Brittany, for a large part of France. But as during the Terror commerce, industry, and the commodities of life were no more thought of than religion, art, literature or the peaceable pursuits of learning, even the buildings hitherto used for the very necessities of life were turned into prisons.

If the history of the dark dungeon of L'Entrepôt had

been written, the *Mi prigioni* of Silvio Pellico would be a holiday recital. How insipid would be the tales of the Piombi in Venice, or the Tour de Nesle in France! The Inferno of Dante, alone, could give an idea of those horrors. It has been calculated that fifteen thousand persons perished within its walls during the six months of Carrier's rule. Those who did not die there, or within the walls of other prisons, were taken regularly every night to be drowned in the river, or early every morning to be shot in the quarries of Gigan. Many facts related to me have contributed to give me this impression.

I was born, baptized, and brought up in the parish of Ste. Croix, whose *curé* during my youth, the venerable M. de Beauregard, had gathered around its altar, after the Revolution, the twenty-five or thirty aged clergymen, whose appearance greatly impressed me when I saw them every Sunday at high Mass and Vespers. The good *curé*, who was fond of boys or young men, received me most kindly every time I paid him a visit. There was no ceremony on these occasions. When he was not engaged, the old woman who opened the door allowed me to run up to his room without being announced.

On one occasion I had not even to knock; the door was ajar, and as soon as I reached it, my surprise was great to see the old man seated near his table, with a bundle of papers in his hands, and his face, which was turned towards me, all bathed in tears. I was going to withdraw, fearing to intrude, but he saw me and called me, beckoning with his hands, for his sobs, at first, prevented him from speaking. When I sat down and he had composed himself, "You come just in time," he said,

" my dear friend, to see the list of which I once spoke to you. You remember I could not find it at the time; I have just stumbled on it in a book of my library where I must have put it to mark the place." It was written on several sheets of thin paper; and M. de Beauregard told me he had just counted the names, and found more than four hundred.

Most of them had been his friends when he was a young man. They all perished in two drownings ordered by Carrier. There were many more of those executions, he said, but as this list contained the names of most of those whom he had known personally, he attached a great importance to it; the mere sight of it had brought a flood of tears to his eyes. He could swear to the authenticity of that record, which had been written by a trusty friend who had remained unmolested in Nantes during the Revolution. This list of M. de Beauregard contained only the names of clergymen of the diocese of Nantes in whom he took a particular interest. But a great number of priests who belonged to the dioceses of Poitiers, of Luçon and of Angers, were brought into Nantes and perished by drowning. Many laymen and common people were put to death in the same manner; and the *déportation verticale*, as Carrier called his *noyades*, was not exclusively applied to priests and nuns.

There was a moment when the faction which had so long tyrannized over France could have been quietly suppressed, and would have fallen forever under the verdict of public opinion, if it had not been, to a great degree, fostered by the hero whom the nation had placed at its head with the evident intention of being free from the incubus of this monster. That moment was un-

doubtedly the accession of Napoleon to power. When the Bourbons came it was too late, and the crime cannot be laid at their door. It would not be difficult to prove that at Napoleon's return from Egypt, and particularly at the 18th Brumaire, the young general who already excited such a genuine enthusiasm in the heart of the whole nation could have done what he wished with the wretched party which then thought only of keeping quiet, and endeavoring to obtain simply the forgiveness of oblivion. Was it prudent, was it the part of a true statesman to grant it to them without any exception? Was it even possible, so soon after the frenzy of this republic had filled the world with an undisguised feeling of horror? It has been said that the glory of the battlefield had obtained for the nation in the eyes of Europe the pardon of those excesses.

This was not true in 1800. The only victories of which France could then boast were those of '93, which were merely the bursting out of a devastating volcano; and somewhat later those of Italy, and they did not belong any more to the Revolution, and, on the contrary, prepared the way for a saving policy if Napoleon had understood it. He himself destroyed at once all the accumulation of political absurdities which had disgraced France from 1789, but it was for his own selfish ends and to establish firmly his own despotic rule, and for no other object. Had he had in view the permanent good of the country, he would have begun by destroying without hope of resurrection, not political systems only, but the faction which had torn France to pieces. And for this there was no need of destroying the republicans themselves, but there was an absolute need of killing the party.

Did he ever denounce it by a single word in his numerous speeches at the time? Did he induce publicists to come forward boldly, and settle forever French opinion in antagonism to the crimes which were still fresh in the memory of all? He would not have permitted it, under the pretext that it was imprudent to open again the wounds of the country; yet the wounds continued to be sore, and festered inwardly only to break out openly before long. The party itself continued to exist. If such mild *littérateurs* as de Fontanes and Delille were allowed by Napoleon to write weak verses in apology of the former victims of the Terror, he would not certainly have consented that such a poet as Gilbert, had he still been alive, should have denounced in burning words the well-known authors of atrocities unheard of before.

To pretend that the Jacobins were still strong in France and that it was prudent at least to fear their power, is simply untrue of that precise epoch of the Consulate. No one knew it better than Napoleon, who did not allow a single shred of their political theories to remain woven in the new constitution he gave to France. He might as well have destroyed the party by making France a unit; but he did not wish it for two reasons: First, he thought of pitting the Jacobins against the Royalists, who were at bottom the only party he feared, in order to govern more easily in the midst of their quarrels; and thus he secured the existence of both sides in France, so that they continue, even at this moment, to be pitted against each other, and the great cause of the weakness of the country against foreign foes. Was this, I ask, the part of a patriotic statesman? But the second reason Napoleon had for the adoption of this policy

was still worse, and more damning to his reputation. He leaned, in fact, toward the Jacobins and preferred them to the opposite party.

In the only book that he wrote when a young man, the celebrated *Souper de Beaucaire*, he openly advocated the principles of the Mountain in the convention; and this happened in the palmy days of Robespierre. It is true that when he became the master of France, he did his best to withdraw from circulation all the copies of that work which were known to exist; but he never declared his regret for having written it; and his subsequent conduct proved that he never experienced such a regret. A sagacious man will always attribute the mild policy of the Emperor toward the Terrorists more to that inward leaning than to any fear of them. Still writers will continue to maintain the contrary, and to prop up their opinions by such facts as the one given by Capefigue in his biography of Talleyrand: "Alexander of Russia having signed this solemn declaration [in April, 1814] that he would no more enter into negotiations with Napoleon and his family, the Senate began to act conformably to it; the republican party [in the Senate] led by l'abbé Gregoire, Destutt de Tracy, and Lambrecht, finding at last a sweet occasion of revenge, pronounced the dethronement of Napoleon."

The reader will naturally conclude from this that the Republican (or Jacobin) party, always strong and active during the Empire, and constantly watching for a favorable opportunity, found it at last at the entrance of the allied sovereigns in Paris, and became mainly instrumental in dethroning the detested Emperor who probably would have continued to rule over France had it not been for this decree of the Republicans in the Senate.

But this supposition is all a dream. If the Jacobin faction continued to exist under Napoleon, it was only because he kept it up himself, and at his downfall it was altogether forgotten. And to prove that the fall of the despot was not due to its power, it is sufficient to look at the three names mentioned by Capefigue; namely, Gregoire, Destutt de Tracy, and Lambrecht, who were no more influential at that epoch in France than any three other men taken at random in the whole country.

But proofs more pointed still must be given, that all along Napoleon favored the party which had committed so many excesses, so that if this sect has yet a great power in France at this late day, it is mainly due to his protection, without which it would have fallen long ago under the burden of public contempt and horror. This is a very important question which requires a careful handling and strong proof. There is no need here of stringing together a large amount of small facts, and drawing from them conclusions which others might controvert. A more serious and striking process will consist in placing under the eyes of the reader the chief features of the social state of France, after Napoleon had ruled over it for nearly a decade of years. It will be easy to prove that this social state was his work, and that with the materials that the Revolution had placed in his hands when he began to rule in 1800, he might have secured a very different state of affairs.

The following was the remarkable spectacle which struck everybody who merely opened his eyes, say in 1810, provided the onlooker had some acuteness of perception. In all classes of society, beginning from the

highest, and going down gradually to the lowest, the most strange mixture of characters, opinions, conflicting interests, previous individual history, well-known and opposite aspirations and aims, brought on by the Revolution, had not yet subsided in the least, and did not show any prospect of coalescing in spite of the universal prosperity and of the apparent glory and oneness of the mighty empire. This wild conflict of discordant excitements must be proved as existing at that time, in the palace of the powerful Emperor, in the administrative branch of the government, in the hierarchy of the Church itself, in the department of instruction and the public schools, in all the walks of private life, in the professions, among the burghers in town, and the peasants in the country. No one in those various categories had felt compelled either from the weight of authority, or the voice of public opinion, to abjure any of his previous errors, and to bind himself to a new and different life so as to make the country homogeneous. Thus discord of aims, opinions and conduct was the rule everywhere, except in the army, whose military glory had introduced a complete uniformity in every possible respect.

Whatever is naturally vague in this general affirmation will assume a peculiar shape and distinction in the enumeration which follows; and if the phenomenon was so striking at that epoch, it was precisely on account of a universal want of harmony between all the social groups which then went to form the nation. The terrible upheaval of the Revolution was undoubtedly the primary cause of it; but I maintain that Napoleon did not take the proper steps for bringing back national harmony as far as it could be done, and he did not take

those steps because he was himself a revolutionist and never recanted his former social heresies.

And first, what was the moral complexion of the Emperor's palace; what were the surroundings of his person; what did he require of those who composed his court? It has been said by some that he did all that was possible to give important positions to men of ancient and noble blood, and to bring back on the stage of history the great names that had formerly made France illustrious. This was never his guiding idea. He did not care much for the glories of ancient France, because, personally, he did not and could not belong to it, and he was a very selfish man. His talk about Charlemagne, whose successor he pretended to be, was all nonsense and everybody knew it. He certainly wished, at a late epoch of his reign, to see around his person some of those whose names belonged to the nation and to history, but strange to say, his object was rather to have great ladies around his wife than great lords about himself. And it is particularly after his divorce from Josephine and his marriage with Marie Louise that this became a sort of mania with him. It was for him a mere question of court etiquette, with which the great people of his own creation had very little acquaintance. As to a real conception of the functions of the old aristocracy, it is more than doubtful if Napoleon had the first notion of them; and he would probably have smiled at the ideas of Joseph de Maistre on the subject, had they been published in his day. His own Corsican social status was not of a high degree, and had he belonged to the genuine nobility of the period, he would not certainly have had on that account, the *préjugés de caste*, as they were then called in France,

necessary for making this a prominent feature in his system. Consequently no influence could be derived in his palace from the great aristocratic families which the Revolution had tried its best to destroy, and which he never heartily wished to recall to life. And not only did he not make any real effort in that direction, but even had he wished it he would not have found any sympathy on their part, as they kept aloof from him, with a very few exceptions. This element must, therefore, be entirely discarded.

Look at the names of those who held the first rank after him, and who were around him at his appearances in public on all state occasions, and you will find either plebeians who had obtained a name on the battle-field, like most of his marshals; degraded noblemen, like Talleyrand; or worn-out politicians of the worst kind, like most of his senators; or milk-and-water littérateurs like Fontanes; these were the best, or, finally the odds and ends, that is, the nonentities of all parties that had wrangled among themselves during ten years of anarchy.

Among these various classes of followers, who were clad in all the glory of the empire, the Jacobins were conspicuous. Those of them who had survived their own Reign of Terror and the few proscriptions of the Directory, were still full of life and activity, most of them rich, and not totally deprived of influence owing to the favors bestowed upon them by the new government. They had become princes, dukes, barons, counts or simply senators or prefects. The same titles had been profusely lavished, it is true, on men of a totally different character, and whose previous life had not been stained by atrocious crimes. But what effect, I

ask, could this want of discrimination produce on the soul of the nation? Had the new ruler required, at least, a simple profession of regret for having participated in bloody transactions which had horrified mankind? The slightest mention of it was never made. Nor did those guilty men appear to feel any inclination to do it of their own accord. Nay, it was known to everybody that they continued in the firm conviction that their lives had been spotless, that they had saved the nation by their energy, that their countrymen owed them respect and gratitude, and that posterity would sooner or later acknowledge their worth, and perhaps raise statues in their honor.

It is known that at this day many Frenchmen are openly of this opinion. If you trace it to its source, you will find it taking root in that decade of the new Empire which offered to the eyes of all the consecration of success obtained by the foulest means. After Thermidor and the downfall of Robespierre, Jacobinism appeared so thoroughly dead, and seemed to have sunk under such a deserved load of infamy, that a troop of young men, armed only with sticks, had sufficed to close their hall, and disperse them forever. If the party had been galvanized again under the Directory, the new proscriptions which followed the conflicts of *Vendémiaire* and *Fructidor* (as they were called) served only to further disgrace that party, if that were possible. When Napoleon established his empire, he effectually destroyed all the political ideas on which the faction rested, and he would have had only to show his contempt for the leaders themselves, to secure the total disappearance of that body. But he thought he could use it against the royalists, whom he instinctively dreaded more;

he had helped it himself personally in *Vendémiaire* and concurrently in Fructidor; he had written long before in his *Souper de Beaucaire* in favor of the Mountain; he therefore acted only consistently when he loaded with favors under the Empire what remained of the Jacobin party. All that he required of them was that they should not boast too openly of their former misdeeds; and they did not feel much desire to do so at the time. But he never asked any retraction from the most guilty of them. He consequently ensured the permanence of their ideas. None of them had been condemned; and they seemed, on the contrary, consecrated by the display of greatness and power on the part of the leaders of the party, which began again to raise its head.

What idea could any Frenchman entertain of moral retribution, and the heinousness of crime, when they saw Fouché honored among the grandees of St. Cloud, where Napoleon held his court at that epoch? How could the citizens of Nantes, particularly, who knew Fouché so well, imagine that the career of the Revolution was closed, when the First Consul kept him at the head of his police, though urged by his best friends to discard from his counsels a man who had disgraced himself forever at Nevers and at Lyons? Fouché was eminently the representative of the revolutionary party and continued the same all his life. In spite of the efforts of Duroizoir, in Michaud's *Biographie Universelle*, to prove that in the last part of his life, he showed himself "the supporter of authority and persevered honorably in the task of repairing the evils which he and his party had done to France," the contrary appears from that very elaborate article, where the writer is often

obliged to confess that if Napoleon kept Fouché in power, or restored him to it repeatedly after having discharged him, it was generally as a sop to the Jacobin party, as an intimation, in fact, that Jacobinism was fully alive, since the head man among them enjoyed the confidence of the master, and could protect the rank and file of that faction. That very production of Duroizoir gives the proof of it; and the reader of it must acknowledge that for this reason, if for nothing else, the monsters of '93 continued to have admirers and partisans even under the Bourbons, after what was falsely called the Restoration, and could see their system adopted by a large number of men in France, to our very day. Fouché has been selected here as a practical example; but during the whole period of the First Empire many other men of the same party shared the favor of Napoleon.

The Emperor's court, therefore, was a kind of moral kaleidoscope, exhibiting to the view, together with some men of real worth, who had benefited the nation in the various fields of letters, politics, science and art, beside the more universal one of the camp, a great number of others who had not gained any other distinction in their previous life than that of being factious wranglers and disturbers of the peace, if they had not positively disgraced themselves and their country by shedding torrents of innocent blood. Yet all were rewarded alike, all received equally the favors of the *grand homme* revolved in his glorious orbit, and partook somewhat of his greatness by contributing after him to form the brilliant web of the present annals of the nation.

This was a public scandal, not only in France, but in Europe. Yet this was the great feature of that epoch. It looked as if there was no difference between crime

and virtue, between bloodthirstiness and noble deeds; between degrading passions and sublime aims. I remember still, after nearly seventy years, the perplexing effect produced on me, a mere boy, when after having so often heard the evening conversation of my parents in which such men as Fouché and Talleyrand were openly condemned as having been among those who had cursed the country, the same men were nevertheless often mentioned under the titles of the Prince de Benevento and the Duc d'Otrante, as occupying exalted positions among the Emperor's advisers and the effective rulers of the country.

At all times, it is true, there is undoubtedly in all countries in the ranks of the most conspicuous and powerful, men who are far from deserving the high station they occupy, and whose influence cannot but be hurtful to society and the public welfare. But it is not often that this is carried to the same degree as was then the case in France. The Revolution has been called with justice " the full revelation of the excessive wickedness of many men," but after that full revelation has been laid bare to the eyes of all, it was not to be expected that those who had thus betrayed their inward wickedness should be placed again in offices of trust and of honor. This Napoleon did, under the false pretence of burying the past in oblivion for the good of the country; but in fact because he needed it for his selfish policy, and felt a secret leaning to it.

It is not, consequently, a matter of surprise that beside his court, the administrative branch of his government was likewise affected with the same distemper. Many of the prefects, mayors and lower officials had been ardent Jacobins, and kept in their heart of hearts a

strong attachment to what was then called the system of free principles against all reactionary ideas. These last expressions must be examined for a moment, in order to better understand the object kept in view and the effect produced. The so-called reactionary ideas were those of old France; the supposed free principles were the revolutionary maxims. By a certain number of liberalists the magic words (free principles) were understood to be those of 1789, which could in general be referred to the *contrat social* of Rousseau as to their metaphysical source. These were bad enough, and could not but produce disaster by the evident attempt they made to effect a total change in society so as to leave France without a history, and to disconnect her entirely from her glorious past, as Mr. Taine has shown in his *Origines de la France Contemporaine.* But for a great number of pretended liberalists at that epoch, this was not enough, and free principles were really those which had been advocated by the Mountain. These men I have called all along Jacobins, and I intend to continue doing so. This was perfectly well understood when I was a boy. It was a word of frequent use in the vocabulary of my father, and of many other Frenchmen who had witnessed the antics of that faction. In the eyes of both classes of liberal fanatics, the phrase reactionary ideas was indiscriminately applied to whatever savored of old monarchical France; and of course, this was to be opposed by all manner of means.

In many of his proclamations Fouché spoke strongly in condemnation of what he called reaction, and Duroizoir, his biographer, evidently understands that word as meaning any reactive measure of a violent character,

and, for this reason, he highly approves of these efforts made by the minister of police of Napoleon. But it is much more likely that often, at least, the Jacobin Fouché used the word in the sense explained a moment ago, as it was the only meaning he could attach to it. This is so true that when he appeared once in his life to advocate the cause, and the return of the Bourbons, he took good care to obtain first from Louis XVIII a solemn promise that there should be no reaction, that is, no return to the old principles, and that consequently whatever the Revolution had consecrated in point of maxims and political axioms should be forever secured.

These few words will sufficiently explain the conduct of the men chosen by the Emperor for directing the administrative branch of his government. Many of them were Jacobins as well as liberalists in 1789, and thus they were pledged to oppose any reaction. This does not mean that they were in favor of truly free principles, and that both classes of men were in the least in favor of liberty. It was precisely the reverse, and everybody knows that the government of the First Empire was essentially despotic and personal as the Convention had been. The old French monarchy had never carried the principles of absolutism to so high a degree as the Convention and Napoleon I did. Still this last government was in fact the embodiment of the Revolution, and in consequence obtained its hearty support. The reader of the biography of Fouché by Duroizoir will not consequently wonder that it was Fouché himself who first suggested to Napoleon the necessity of suppressing the liberty of the press, and of subjecting to arbitrary measures of police the individual liberty of all Frenchmen. With the supposed free

principles of '89 and '93, the liberty neither of instruction, nor of worship, nor of speech, nor even of locomotion, was safe against the arbitrary measures of all the rulers of France, beginning with the Emperor himself and his ministers, and ending with the last sub-prefect or mayor of the most insignificant village in the country.

It is this curious social phenomenon which now requires some moments of attention. The men whom Napoleon placed at the head of all the departments of his civil administration were not equally wedded to the same demoralizing principles; and a certain number of them, no doubt, would have heartily supported the government, if it had in the least showed any inclination to bring back in France the reign of moderation, justice and good sense. The author of the *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, M. Thiers, seems fully persuaded that such was the case, and that the rule of Napoleon was constantly that of a high statesmanship desirous of repairing the former evils, until ambition entirely blinded him at the end of his reign. But M. Thiers himself had not proved in this most interesting work that there was a real difference in the views of the Emperor between 1804 and his downfall in 1814. A thoughtful reader, on the contrary, is fully convinced that if Napoleon fell, it was principally because he did not modify any of his ideas, and that his selfish ambition was fully as ardent at the end as it had been at the beginning. It is certainly impossible to perceive any change in the interior, or exterior, policy of the *grand homme*, and he was as opposed to reaction, in the sense explained, on the day he himself took the imperial crown to place it on his own head, without receiving it from the consecrated hands of the Pope, as at the very

end. The diadem he wore only gave a kind of religious sanction to the maxims which had first been imposed on France by a godless and god-forsaken faction, which titan-like was in open revolt against heaven in the very act of founding a new nation.

All the men employed by Napoleon to govern the country knew this well. The great majority of them approved that policy, and were either old Jacobins or liberalists of 1789. A few only had not been converted to revolutionary ideas by what they had witnessed, but they were prudent enough not to show it, and not to give people to understand that they were in favor of reaction.

On this account poor Madame Pouliguen was right when she told me, toward 1811, "Dear little Gus, there is nothing changed in France since the time they openly demolished the churches; no one thinks of rebuilding them, and if anyone continues to profane them, like that blacksmith of whom you complain, he must be left alone, and no one can silence his sacrilegious hammer."

In that eventful year of 1811, twelve months only before the invasion of Russia by Napoleon, anyone who could have penetrated unperceived into the inmost recesses of all the prefectures of the country, and of all the *mairies de département*, would have found himself in the moral atmosphere so pleasant to the supposed moderate Girondins of 1792, on the very eve of bringing Louis XVI to his trial. Men, it is true, were no longer allowed to speak of the actual ruler of France as a tyrant, although he was one in fact, and Louis XVI was not; it was no longer allowed to expatiate in democratic clubs on the best means of saving the country, nor to

conspire openly for the object of taking by storm the palace of Versailles or the Tuilleries; the exterior appearance of things was a great deal changed; but not the substance, nor the recognized axioms of the fundamental law.

The moral substratum on which France rested was absolutely the same, and the maxims which were current in the daily conversations of all the prefects and *maires* of imperial France, differed from the previous ones only in a kind of varnish which had been thickly laid over the surface of everything. It was the system of the former Girondins which prevailed, with the exception of the federalist principle; and the strict feature of complete centralization which had been eagerly adopted by the new ruler was the exact application of the principles of the Mountain, which since then have always been prevalent. The best proof of it is the famous Code of Napoleon, concocted, under the chief inspiration of the master, by a set of jurists thoroughly imbued with the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as understood by the Jacobins of all ages and countries.

This may appear untrue to many good people who never penetrate under the varnished surface, as it was just called. But without entering into a long dissertation which would be misplaced here, it is sufficient to point out for serious consideration the following remarkable fact: Everyone must admit that wherever the maxims of the French Revolution penetrated into Europe and South America, one of the demands most insisted upon by the partisans of the new order was the adoption of the modern French code. This took place particularly in Italy, in Spain, and in all the mushroom

republics of Central and South America. No one can deny that there must have been an object in this insistence on the part of the avowed revolutionists in all those countries; and it is difficult to point out any other reason than the one assigned for this most remarkable fact.

It seems, therefore, allowable to infer that the First Empire was the main cause of the continuance of that party which has already occupied us so long, and with which we have not yet concluded. But it seems that the restoration of the Catholic religion by the Concordat agreed upon between Napoleon and Pius VII was at least a return to some ideas of old France, and could be called a reaction, as the word is understood by me. The liberalists of all grades, the Jacobins particularly, understood it so, and complained bitterly of it. A reproachful remark addressed to Napoleon by one of his generals, Augereau, if I do not mistake, expressed it tersely: "I cannot suffer patiently to see the re-establishment of what has cost the death of so many thousand Frenchmen to destroy." It is not my intention to belittle so great a fact as this Concordat, which every good man must consider as one of the noblest titles Napoleon ever had to glory. Still from a previous passage the reader has seen that it is called a shred of religion; and although the expression is undoubtedly strong, it is safe to say that it is not altogether unmerited. A few reflections will prove that this very act of the Emperor, so deserving of gratitude on the part of the French and of the whole Church, is, in fact, one of the best proofs that can be offered of his settled intention to destroy as sparingly as possible whatever the Revolution had consecrated, and to repair

very little, if anything, of what it had endeavored to demolish forever.

As the personnel of Napoleon's military and civil government consisted of a strange mixture of revolutionary and conservative elements of old Jacobins, parvenu officers, and returned nobles, so in the clergy also we find the same commingling of the conservative and revolutionary elements in the restored Church of France. Of course the Revolutionary element was not so conspicuous there as among the civil officers and officials. The Pope used his utmost efforts to exclude the disloyal priests and he was to some extent successful. Still, in spite of the promises of Napoleon, he was forced to accept not a few of the men who had betrayed the Church. Not only a certain number of former Constitutional bishops were appointed to the new sees, without recantation, but what was perhaps worse, in nearly all dioceses, a great number of priests who had taken the schismatical oath were entrusted with parishes without any expression of repentance. Some of them openly boasted of this, and remained a source of scandal to their death. The Pope had demanded the enactment of strict rules for their readmission into the ranks of the newly constituted clergy. But these rules were disregarded in many cases, owing to the opposition of the ministers and prefects who obeyed the orders of their master at Paris.

At the conclusion of the Concordat between the Pope and the Emperor, as many as twelve of the schismatical bishops created by the Constituent Assembly were appointed to as many new sees. Caprara, the papal legate, strongly remonstrated against this proceeding; and Portalis, the Gallican lawyer, who was one of the

chief agents of Napoleon in this negotiation with the Holy See, had felt the impropriety of the measure, and wished the Emperor not to insist upon it. But he was overruled by his master, who at first wanted to have fifteen of the Constitutional Bishops appointed, but was finally satisfied with twelve. This persistence of the Emperor is a proof of Napoleon's deliberate policy, which was powerfully seconded by Talleyrand. The ex-bishop of Autun had been the author and promoter of the schism. He was, at the time of the Concordat, minister of foreign affairs; and as this transaction was thought to be, and was, in fact, a treaty between two powers, he had a voice in its settlement, although the impropriety of the participation of the apostate bishop was evident to all.

The Holy See was finally obliged to consent, because otherwise the Concordat would have miscarried, to the great injury of souls in France. But it was agreed that the constitutional bishops should not only undergo the usual examination, but that they should also openly express their regret for having participated in the schism. The formula of this recantation offered so many difficulties that it is even now doubtful whether any recantation was made. Many of them afterwards declared that they had never made any recantation.

As late as the coronation of the Emperor by the Pope, several years afterwards, the difficulty remained unsolved. On this occasion, eight of these prelates expressed their regret for their former conduct. Four of them, however, continued obstinate, or if they appeared to yield at this solemn moment, they protested subsequently that they had not yielded to recantation. These men were Lecoz, Archbishop of Besançon,

Lacombe, Bishop of Angoulême, Laurine of Strassburg and Raymond of Dijon.

I know that in the city of Nantes, two of the new *curés* were men who had taken the constitutional oath and never recanted, namely, those of St. Nicholas and of St. Jacques; still, in this large and influential city there were only six parish priests in all. In 1818, I was a boarder in the private school of M. Michon, the worthy curate of St. Jacques'. The *curé*, M. Guibert, had been a constitutional priest. He had obtained from Miné, the schismatical Bishop of Nantes, one of the best parishes in the city; and after the Concordat Bishop Duvoisin had been obliged to appoint him pastor of St. Jacques'. Though I was very young at the time, I could not help being struck by many anomalies and irregularities which were not calculated to promote the good of souls.

M. Michon, the excellent curate, under whose roof I spent two of the happiest years of my life, was born in La Vendée of respectable parents, who shared with their children in all the vicissitudes of those troublous times. He had passed a good part of his childhood among a generous people engaged in a terrific struggle against the whole power of the Convention; and the thrilling stories that I heard from him are yet fresh in my mind, and filled my young heart with admiration and love for him. After the restoration of order under Napoleon, he commenced his studies for the priesthood when he was over twenty years old. His ardent faith and natural eloquence made him a most efficient minister of God. He had the whole weight of a large parish on his shoulders, for M. Guibert, the nominal pastor, took his duty far from seriously. M. Michon had,

moreover, opened a school in his house, as the great need of the time was the Christian education of the children; and owing to this I had the good fortune to spend the years 1818 and 1819 in his house. The parish of St. Jacques did not belong to the city proper, though it was annexed to it municipally. Situated on the left bank of the Loire, just south of Nantes, from which it was separated by the river fully two miles wide there, it was connected with it by a long line of six or seven bridges. Their abutments rested on islands which dot the stream in great numbers at that place; so that wherever the traveller comes out of the lengthy but dingy street which unites the bridges, the view expands to a great distance east and west along both banks of a noble river nearly as broad as the Tappan Zee on the Hudson.

But while the scenery here is attractive, the inside of the houses is far from being so. The majority of the people at that time were wretchedly poor; they were moreover, morally a set of God-forsaken Jacobins. They lived in the parts of the city facing towards La Vendée, and a few miles beyond, the traveller found himself in the midst of the *bocage* where Charette had during three years kept the republican armies at bay. The fiercest enemies of the old régime had apparently flocked to that wretched suburb, and in my time it was not much more loyal than during the Terror. To give an idea of it a couple of anecdotes will be appropriate.

On one occasion I had been allowed by M. Michon to go home for a few days, to visit my parents. On my return my father gave me a note for a man living on the dismal causeway beyond the river. It related

to something connected with his trade; and the man was a respectable citizen in very comfortable circumstances. As soon as I entered, I found myself in the midst of a large family, where I was received with open arms. A little boy ten years old is always an interesting little boy. They made me sit down, partake of some refreshments, and unloosed my tongue by questioning me. All went on admirably until, in my simplicity, I disclosed to them the fact that I was a boarder at M. Michon's. It is difficult to describe the sudden change, the gloom succeeding the innocent mirth, the scowling brow replacing the smiles, and the bitterness in the words of these people. "What, you live in a priest's house!" Had I announced to them that I had been apprenticed to a gang of burglars and cut-throats, and that I was learning the trade of highwaymen and assassins, they could not have expressed greater abhorrence.

I tried to vindicate the character of M. Michon's house, and I told them that if they had so poor an idea of it, it was probably because they did not know it. "Not know it," exclaimed the mother of the family. "We know that *canaille* well enough and wonder only that decent people can have anything to do with them." This, I confess, staggered me, for I had heard from my instructor and father that the French women in general had preserved their respect and often an ardent love for religion.

"Madame," I said, "I do not understand why you so hate the priests." "It is because I have a deep feeling of religion," she replied, "that I hate priests. Jesus brought us true religion, but the priests have corrupted it," etc. I could not at that age, of course, understand anything of this distinction between Jesus

Christ and the priests. Still I had sense enough to perceive that the Christian religion, deprived of priests, would be no religion at all. So when parting immediately after, I said, "If there were no priests, I suppose there would be no churches, and without churches and priests, I cannot see how people could have a religion." So saying, I left them and I never saw them again.

Here is my second anecdote. During my two years' stay in the parish of St. Jacques, I made the acquaintance of a boy of about my own age whose father was even higher up in the social scale than the man just described. He carried on the business of a sugar refiner, an industry very active at Nantes, owing to the large trade of the city with the Antilles. I had often seen this factory, which made quite a fine appearance from one of the bridges. On the façade of the central building, appeared conspicuously in very large blue letters, "Sugar Refinery."

I had heard that before the French Revolution it was a monastery of Récollets, and I knew that good old Père Placide, who in my time said his Mass every day in the church of St. Jacques, had been an inmate of that house. I have now no recollection of the way I became acquainted with my new friend. I only remember that, having gone to fish for minnows, I found a very good place for my purpose near the refinery. On one occasion, I met the boy there, and this was no doubt the way we became friends. We soon met again, and after a while I was taken into the huge building. Several large halls or apartments inside which had not been appropriated by the manufacturer for his business had a very strange look. But the strangest place of all was

the central hall. The first time I entered it, I astonished my friend greatly by exclaiming, "What can it have been!" All around the halls, I remarked shelves, running from the floor to the ceiling. The shelves were empty; they had not been removed, but they were put to no use.

"Have you no eyes?" replied my friend. "It was the library of the monks." "And what have they done with the books?" I inquired. "Done with them; what could they do with them but throw them into the river!" my friend said. I cannot, of course, say whether those thousands of books had been disposed of in this manner; but certainly the little boy was not joking and what he said he must have heard from his parents. That an immense number of volumes were wantonly destroyed during the Terror is my firm conviction. Many, of course, held the opposite opinion and bring forward decrees of the Convention, resolutions of the Commune, legislative acts of all sorts to prove the contrary. They moreover, point out that many of the existing public libraries of French cities consist of books formerly belonging to convents.

But the testimony of my young friend at the sugar factory is the basis of my opinion. I speak of Nantes in particular. Its public library, when I was a young man, contained about sixty thousand volumes, according to the librarian's statement. It was mainly composed of the books which the government had appropriated at the closing of the monasteries and of the former colleges, which were all under the direction of the clergy. I never heard that the former custodians of those libraries tried to save any of their books. They could not have done so extensively, as there were well-

kept catalogues which were handed over to the government.

If the bulk of the books in the Library of Nantes in my youth was composed of the volumes formerly belonging to the monks, others, more modern and more to the public taste, had been procured. I did not ascertain the number of new books, but ten thousand is a low estimate. Very few readers, as I ascertained, called on the librarian for any of the old monkish books, and this gentleman took as little trouble to find them out as he could. As I was at the time a young abbé, whenever an application for an old book was made and I was in the building, M. Paris, the librarian, referred the applicant to me. But it was not every day that the old volumes were applied for. Consequently, many new books had been purchased. This would leave fifty thousand as the number of volumes from former convents and colleges then in the Library of Nantes.

It is certainly difficult to believe that the church possessed only fifty thousand books in Nantes before the Revolution. The Oratorian College alone, where Napoleon's notorious minister of police, M. Fouché, was for a time professor of philosophy, must have contained that number of volumes. The empty shelves of the Récollets' library, which produced such an impression on me, could hold at least twenty thousand. What would be the aggregate of the books contained in the Theological School of Nantes, connected with the Sorbonne, in the convents of the Capuchins, Dominicans, Carmelite Friars, Carthusians, Franciscans of all varieties whose ruins I have often gazed at? Moreover, the numerous convents of women were not altogether without

books. It is well known that many of them were rich in treasures of this kind. But what struck me most of all was that the modern Library of Nantes possessed only two manuscripts—a Bible and a *Livre d'heurs* which had been used by Anne de Bretagne. Who can suppose that the Cathedral of Nantes, for instance, which went back to very early times, was altogether without manuscripts and records? And the destruction of libraries cannot be a matter of surprise, when at the same time the most precious monuments of old France were ruthlessly destroyed with a fury worthy of Vandals.

I think that the story of my little partner in my fishing excursions was true, and that the books of the Récollets in Nantes were thrown into the Loire. But these stories give some idea of the spirit of the mass of the parishioners of St. Jacques'. M. Guibert, the *curé*, was not the man to inspire them with a greater love for religion. Not that his life was scandalous, but he was a man without zeal. He rarely appeared in church, except to say his Mass on Sundays. At least, I never saw him at the altar on week days. He appeared occasionally at the evening services in Lent, and he always performed some of the public functions of Holy Week, particularly on Holy Saturday, when he invariably blessed the paschal candle and the fount. There was a confessional in the church with his name inscribed, but he seldom heard confessions. The burden of the ministry fell on the shoulders of the *vicaire*. He alone preached, heard confessions, visited the sick and took charge of the administration of the parish.

As to the catechetical instruction of the children M. Michon had entire charge thereof; he had no Brothers or Sisters to share his work. During ten months in

the year he taught Christian doctrine twice a week besides Sundays. He also taught the children to sing, and, as he had a fine voice, and a real taste for music, he never tired of leading the choir of about six hundred little boys and girls, whose voices still ring in my ears, swelling and rising to the very vault of the old Benedictine church which had been granted to the parish by the government after the Revolution. I never heard M. Michon complain of having too much to do, and particularly I never heard him refer to the inactivity of Monsieur le Curé. During two years I ate at his table and his conversation there was always animated. Very often he took a walk with us, particularly on the long summer evenings. Being of a sanguine and amiable disposition, he never appeared to conceal his thoughts and spoke freely on every subject. He was, of course, an ardent royalist, being the son of a Vendean; he detested the Revolution, and he always showed his deep attachment to the Church.

He knew that M. Guibert had never recanted his oath to the civil constitution of the clergy, of which it seems that he even occasionally boasted. Yet I never heard from M. Michon the least word, nay, the least suggestion reflecting on the pastor of the parish. Quite the contrary, on occasions of great ceremonies he consulted Monsieur le Curé concerning what was important, and he succeeded sometimes in bringing him among the parishioners. It was from M. Guibert I received my first Holy Communion; M. Michon only assisted him. In fact, on the day of first Communion, the worthy *vicaire* himself led the procession of the children to the pastor's house, which was somewhat distant from his his own, to thank him for the care he had taken of the

children. His conduct was therefore most Christian and the best calculated to prevent scandal. As far as it depended upon M. Michon, the retention of the constitutional *curè* was neutralized. But this was not the case everywhere, In many places much unpleasantness must have resulted from intercourse of priests so unlike and even opposed to each other as MM. Michon and Guibert.

It was undoubtedly a great service rendered to France by Napoleon to provide for the public higher education of boys after the destruction of the old schools by the Convention and the lame attempts undertaken for their restoration by the Directory. France was relapsing into barbarism. Any reorganization of classical studies was preferable to the total lack of liberal training for youth which then prevailed all through the country. Unfortunately, however, the Emperor's scheme had several serious defects. The chief aim of Napoleon was to use public instruction as a prop of authority. But this, in our opinion, was not the worst feature. All the defects of the former classical teaching were retained and the pagan spirit was inoculated into the new literature of the French. The absolute sterility of all branches of studies under the First Empire is well known. In history, poetry, the drama, fiction, etc., men slavishly imitated the works existing at the end of the eighteenth century and it is admitted that literature was at its lowest ebb at this time. M. Taine, in his *Origines de la France Contemporaine,* justly regards this literature as one of the causes of the French Revolution. But this is not the strongest objection which can be brought against French education as restored by Napoleon. The personnel of his

Lycées and High Schools were even more worthy of censure.

We do not mean to condemn all of these men as unworthy to be entrusted with the education of youth. Some of them were very worthy men, M. de Fontanes particularly. Though this gentleman did not perhaps deserve the immense reputation he enjoyed, still his sincere religion, his pure morality, his ardent devotion to the good of the future generations, deserve all praise. The worst that can be said of him is that he was too straitlaced a *littérateur* of the old régime and too great an admirer of Napoleon, whose tool he became. But for all that, his character was pure, and his intentions were excellent. There were with him in the Université de France, as constituted by Napoleon, a certain number of *proviseurs* and professors for whom the following strictures are not intended.

At the beginning of this century, there was in France a multitude of men, educated before the Revolution, whose careers had been interfered with by the political convulsions to which the country had been subjected. All the professors and instructors in the old universities and colleges, the writers by profession of every degree, the schoolteachers of advanced studies in private institutions, the mathematicians, naturalists, linguists, economists and statisticians, who flourished towards the end of the old régime, had lived during the Revolution on their own means, if they had any, or starved on some stray lessons given in private families. A certain number of them plunged headlong into the excesses of the time and disgraced themselves by becoming ardent revolutionists, or at least by adopting the style and barbarism then prevalent, which Laharpe so

justly characterized as the embodiment of bad taste and bombast. But a great number had lived quietly, and among them excellent professors could have been found by Napoleon.

Many of them had formerly belonged to religious congregations or to the secular clergy, but many likewise were respectable laymen, either single or married. The guillotine had been active among this class during the Terror, still a great number had survived, and were at the disposal of anyone who should need them. They were so numerous all over France, that a selection of the best among them was possible, because colleges were opened by the Emperor only in large cities, and in most of them ten or fifteen professors were sufficient. The Emperor, it seems, had an idea that a good instructor of youth must be unmarried, and he hesitated for some time about enforcing celibacy among the professors of his Université de France. At last he saw the impossibility of doing this, and did what we suppose he thought was the next best thing by fitting his educational establishments with old priests and monks. But strange to say, many of those he selected had not only taken the schismatical oath, but had also shown an ardent revolutionary spirit, going occasionally so far as openly to apostatize from the priesthood, and take wives in imitation of Bishop Talleyrand. It is easy to see what impression these men, who had dishonored the priestly character, or worse still were married and apostate monks, made on their scholars.

What could be the cause of this blunder of Napoleon, who in general had such a strong sense of propriety and fitness? We can see but one reason. Those men had been sympathizers of the Jacobins, and he had

himself been assoc ated with that movement; he thought that he would keep them quiet by g ving them these appointments. The result might, however, have been foreseen. The mere sight of men notorious for their moral delinquency filled their students, either with a dislike for their teaching, or with loose ideas of morality. What effect must it have produced on their religious training! What France needed was a sincere return to the practice of religion. Napoleon himself felt this, for he made a Concordat with the Pope. In spite of the opposition he met with, and throughout his reign, he did not allow open attacks on religion or its ministers. But by the choice he made of many professors in his Université, he placed in a conspicuous position, before the eyes of the pupils, men whose well-known lives had been a disgrace to religion, or a scandal to morality. No one, therefore, can be surprised that when the Restoration came, after the downfall of the Emperor, and when the milder sway of the Bourbons allowed everyone to speak out without restraint, a scandalous outburst of rampant infidelity again astonished Europe, as if the French had not learned anything by their misfortunes.

The delightful little world I am going to describe was confined within the narrow limits of about twenty-five or thirty acres of ground. May the condition of the bulk of the French nation be inferred from that of this little world when I became one of its happy inmates? I think it may. But we must begin by stating the occasion of my being transported into the precincts of this miniature paradise.

A short time after I was taken to M. Houdebine's school, my nurse at the moment of carrying me thither,

remarked that I had lost all my good humor and was evidently sick. My mother took me on her lap, unloosed the front of my dress and suddenly exclaimed: "Gus has the measles!" Of course I was not taken to M. Houdebine's that day, and I have no recollection of the progress, length and termination of the sickness. I only know that several months after what was thought to be a full recovery, there were still unpleasant consequences of the malady, and finally, one day, the doctor came back and after having well examined the case, he said with deliberation: "He must be sent to the country." The country air and exercise alone could restore my strength.

It was then a universal custom in France for people living in cities to entrust their children, if they were sickly, when three, four or five years old, to some peasant family in the suburbs of the town, at least during the summer months. This suggests that the French peasantry, comprising then the mass of the people, were sound, moral, honest and animated with the kindest feelings. It is now, it seems, very different, and the horrible details which have been lately exposed in France with regard to *nourices* and *nourissons*, show the moral decline of the poorer classes at this day. It is true that the late sensational discoveries chiefly regard foundlings, or at least babes given to nurse immediately after their birth, which was not the case in our family, as my mother always considered it a duty to nurse her own children. Still it is evident that there has been an immense change in that respect, and that at this moment it is no longer safe for parents to entrust their children to peasant families even in their neighborhood.

The suburban property, where I was destined to romp

at will during three summers, had formerly belonged to a noble family, and had been confiscated during the Revolution because they had emigrated. The last scion of that old family had lately come back to Nantes and was reduced almost to poverty. He often came to have a chat with my father, as he had nothing to do. He was known under the name of M. Baudry d'Asson. I did not care much for his nobility at the time, but I admired his person, and since that day his portrait has clung to my memory. Of middle height, bright and cheerful countenance, not more than forty years of age, he dressed as neatly as his circumstances would permit, and what struck me most was the care he took of always wearing well-blackened boots *à la Russe*, over his pantaloons, but reaching only just under the knee with fine dangling tassels in front. The poor fellow took a sad delight in describing the estates and various pieces of property which would have come to his share, if the Revolution had not taken them from his family. I still remember the amusing story he once related to my parents concerning the farm which was to be a paradise to me.

It must have been this gentleman who advised my father to make arrangements for boarding me with the good people who rented and worked on the property as a farm. They had been there under the Baudrys, and the Revolution had not ejected them when the ancient owners of the property were dispossessed. This is most probably the way it happened that, on a fine April morning in 1811, I was taken by both my father and mother to that spot and placed under the gentle care of Mère Richard. The property, which comprised about twenty-five or thirty acres, included

a large vegetable garden and a fine meadow in front. Back of this, on the right, was the farmer's cottage where I was to sleep and eat with Mother Richard's family; adjoining it on the left, but separated by a high wall, was the owner's house with several out-houses and a blooming parterre full of rose bushes in front.

Occasionally, I dared to intrude inside of the parterre when the parvenu family were not in the house, and I particularly remember that I took great delight in capturing inside of the open roses, the beautiful green beetles called in Nantes *cathelinettes*. Behind the peasant's cottage and the owner's residence were some fields covered generally with some coarser vegetable products, such as potatoes, turnips and beets. But on the side of the meadow, and at the end of it, commenced an avenue of Lombardy poplars, then in all their freshness and beauty, which extended as far as an open pasture ending on the banks of the Erdre River. This was the place which inspired me with love of the country; it looked so different from the old streets of Nantes, dated certainly from the twelfth century, if it did not go back more than two thousand years, when the city was the Celtic Condivicnum. The inmates require a somewhat longer description. Mère Richard might have been at the time a little over sixty years of age. Her dress was that of the peasant class; a coarse gown reaching from her waist to her feet; on her shoulders and breast an ample *mouchoir de battiste* of bright color and simple pattern; the chemise was seen only around her neck by a narrow collar of fine muslin always perfectly white and well starched. Over her head and hiding almost altogether the white tresses of her hair,

wa a particular kind of hood in woolen stuff, generally of a brownish or yellowish color.

Contrary to the habits of this class of persons, she never, that I remember, wore on her feet the *sabots* of the country, but always clean shoes of *basane* or sheepskin. There was about her a peculiar kind of neatness, though the peasant women in my boyhood were always neat and differed a great deal in that regard from the poor women of the cities and towns. But among them Mère Richard wore particular marks of distinction about her person which attracted me when I was a little boy. She never raised her voice above the ordinary tone of well-bred people, and I never saw her angry, which is so often the case with uneducated people. Still she was completely uneducated and did not know how to read. She seldom left the house, and I suppose on account of her age, never joined the working people in the garden and fields as all peasant women do in France. When I went to live with her, she had been a widow many years, and ever since the death of her husband she administered the property as well as he himself could have done. French women of all classes have a peculiar talent for the management of affairs, besides household duties. The house itself did not take much of her time, as the whole of the interior consisted of a large single room, with the beds arranged along the wall, and a long dinner table in the centre. The making of the beds and the sweeping of the floor was not one of her duties, but was looked after by her daughter, who was to be my nurse.

The Christian name of this good girl was Donatienne. As the place belonged to the parish of St. Donatien, many girls in the neighborhood bore the same name,

but for me there never was but one Donatienne, and this was my nurse. She was then about seventeen years old, and would have been quite handsome, if her face had not been completely disfigured by small-pox. Still she had very sweet eyes and a most winning smile, and I never minded the traces of her former disease. When I was placed in her hands and under her care, she appeared delighted to have a little three-year old boy as a pet, and promised my parents that she would see to me as if she were my mother. The poor little woman never had any other son, because she never married. The foolish young peasants strutting around her did not look at her moral beauty, and appeared as fastidious as many a fop in fashionable life. She had, therefore, nothing to do except to work on her mother's small farm, as long as her mother lived, and at her death, to hire herself out to strangers, if her brother married and obliged her to leave the spot where she was born and wished to die.

That brother's name was Renaud, then a fine young man of twenty, the only hope of his mother and sister. He was full of activity and energy, and with the help of a few men and women managed to keep under the best cultivation thirty acres, of which not an inch was left unproductive. This may not seem much to men of this age and country, in full enjoyment of all modern improvements and labor-saving machines of every description. But poor Renaud knew nothing of all these inventions. To till his large garden and keep it filled with the vegetables that the market required; to ensure every year a good crop of hay in his fine meadow; to obtain from the fields behind the house all they could produce of coarser products, he had only

his arms and his spade. He had not a single horse to help him and the produce of his garden had to be taken to market every morning on his own head and those of his hired helpers.

He had besides, to attend to his numerous fruit trees, to keep in good trim the flower garden of the master, to cut the wood for the kitchen, or for warming the house in winter, to gather and save the manure from three cows that gave the family milk, cream curds and butter. There was at the farther end of the garden a very nice and clean pond of pure water, large enough to float a small pleasure boat, and full of gold fishes and minnows, which were reserved for the pleasure of the children of the parvenu family. The stone wall enclosing this pond was to be kept in repair, and several weeping willows were to be trimmed artistically, whose long hanging branches touched the surface of the water, and formed a green arbor for the protection of the skiff when the children were tired of rowing. It was like a landscape on canvas, and the least want of care in the surroundings would have spoiled the picture in which the parvenu family appeared to take a great delight whenever they came, that is, about once a week. Poor Renaud had to see that nothing could offend their artistic taste and displease the lady, who had taken lessons in landscape drawing.

All these things prove that Renaud was not idle. But what deserves special attention were the relations of Mère Richard and her two children. Of course, the greatest harmony and union prevailed among them. The old mother was treated as the head of the family, and the thought never came into the minds of the young people that they might perhaps better their condition

by leaving the old woman, and looking for some more profitable occupation. They never handled money as their own; every penny went to Mére Richard, who treated her two children as she had always done; but she had no pocket money to give them. The fact is that Renaud and Donatienne regarded and treated their mother as a lady who had the innate right of ruling them and of being obeyed. For my part, I shared this feeling, and I would never have treated her with the familiarity with which I treated my nurse. And many a Mère Richard was to be met with among peasant families around Nantes in my boyhood. Afterwards, when I was about sixteen or eighteen years of age, I remarked similar conditions in the country around Ancenis, Chateaubriand, Bourgneuf-en-Ritz, etc. The mother of the family everywhere held a commanding position in her truly patriarchal home, and she also took care that her children not only had substantial meals, but never wore tattered clothes. I never saw Renaud with a rent in his trousers or vest, and if any accident happened when at work, it was soon repaired by the good mother, who knew very well how to darn stockings, replace buttons, and in general use her needle and scissors to advantage.

I know this does not agree with the description given of the peasant families of his time by La Bruyère and repeated by many writers of our age; and I will not accuse the great writer of the *Charactères* of having slandered the poor and maliciously made of them savages and caricatures. At the end of the reign of Louis XIV, in the midst of the frightful distress caused by his wars, some of the scenes described by La Bruyère occurred in parts of France. But I cannot believe it

was universal, and I know that the state of things described by him did not exist at the beginning of this century. When a boy, and later when a young man, I never saw the farming class so miserable and degraded as were the workmen in towns and cities. It is true that the laborers in the country, those that had no farm of their own, in fact nothing but the daily wages they received, were wretchedly low; still they were fed by those who employed them; which was not the case with the city workmen; and as long as they had work they never felt hunger. As to those who had a small farm, if they had to labor hard, at least they were far above want, and took good care of their persons and families. A small number had charge of large *métairies* (lands worked on shares for the owner) with four, eight or twelve yoke of oxen, which were used for ploughing; these men could even save money, and procure some of the superfluities of life. This is my experience at the beginning of this century, and I never witnessed the degradation of the peasants, now so much spoken of.

This comparatively comfortable state of affairs had not been the result of the Revolution, at least around Nantes. The people invariably said that they were better off under the old régime, and I have known very few peasants who claimed that they gained by the change of government. I know that many are of a contrary opinion, and historians have insisted that the lower orders in France, especially the peasant class, were devotedly attached to the changes brought by the Revolution on account of the advantages they had derived from them. The peasants, it is true, had been pleased with the abolition of feudal rights, which Mr.

Taine has shown to have been a great injustice done to the nobility; but apart from this they were far from preferring their present to their former condition.

But let us return to my story. I was so well satisfied when I was left alone with Donatienne that I did not even cry. My little bed had been prepared near her own and it was time to retire. It was the only one in the large room that had no curtains, as it was still considered as a kind of cradle for a baby. It was placed transversely at the foot of that of my nurse, and was exactly as long as her bed was wide. Donatienne was very careful to show me how I could thrust my little arms under her curtains, and wake her up, if I should want anything during the night. She did not fail to make me kneel down to say my prayers before going to rest.

It was the first time that I ever slept outside of my mother's room; and if the sight of the strange place produced in me any unpleasant feeling, it did not last long, for I soon fell into a deep slumber.

Since then I have thought over the custom, then generally prevailing among French peasants, of having all the inmates of a house sleep in the same room. Philosophers of the "intuitive school" and perhaps also good Christians of the straitlaced class, see in it a great incentive to immorality. For my part, I have never seen greater modesty than in the peasants' houses in France. The daily dress of the French peasants satisfied all the requirements of modesty, and when retiring they always practised the greatest reserve. When they had once retired inside the curtains they were as private as if they had been in a separate chamber. Nobody thought of intruding. The whole process of

undressing, it may be said, took place behind the curtains; only the outer garments were removed before retiring. In Mère Richard's house, I never saw even my nurse *en déshabillé*.

How long I slept that first night I cannot say, but it must have been between eight and nine o'clock on the following morning when my nurse came to wake me up, dress me, and make me say my prayers. She had been up since four o'clock, had gone to market with the others, and taken her breakfast after returning. It was indeed, a hard life she led, but she never repined at it. The habit of rising so early, of carrying on the head a heavy basket of vegetables or fruits, and of tramping with her wooden shoes a distance of about three miles, must have taxed to the utmost her slender frame. Mère Richard alone remained in the house with me, but she never woke me up. All the others, including the hired servants, who slept either at home or in out-houses, started off regularly before five in winter and as early as three in mid-summer, when the sun rose before four. They were all back at eight to take breakfast, and to begin work on the farm.

Strange to say, I have no recollection of the food that was given me at Mère Richard's, and this shows that I was not dissatisfied. No doubt we followed the custom of the country; our breakfast must have consisted of buckwheat cake broken in fresh milk, or *soup mitonnée*, with the fragrance of the excellent butter made in the country, or fried slices of what is called there *gruaux*. There was also a large tumbler full of fresh milk. The doctor had prescribed three glasses a day. He prescribed nothing else but air and exercise. These details show that the peasants around Nantes were not then

in danger of starving. There may have been meat at dinner, never at breakfast or supper.

The chief food the first day was the sight of the open country; I had scarcely remarked it the previous day, when my parents brought me in; on Monday morning I could not think of anything else. In April, with the shrubs budding, the fruit trees in full blossom, the dew sparkling on the grass and the bushes, the birds flying around and filling the air with the harmony of their song, I was transported to a paradise of which I had never dreamt. When I lived in the city, it is true, I was taken to the suburbs on every Sunday afternoon where I could see some green hawthorns or fragrant rose bushes. Every week-day my nurse carried me to one of the small parks used by the children for their recreation; but this had nothing to compare with the panorama that was spread before my eyes, when Donatienne, taking me in her arms, brought me to the cottage door and left me in front of the house to ramble wherever I chose to go, provided I remained in sight. This was her only injunction and I seldom disobeyed it. In fact, I generally preferred to remain in her neighborhood, because I soon began to love her and to think that there could be no better company for me. But I was not to disturb her at her work, and this obliged me to take care of myself.

The poor girl had not much time to bestow upon me. She used in general to work with a few female servants, picking peas, gathering beans, weeding the beds of young plants, thinning the seedlings of carrots, parsnips, salsifys, or lettuce, in due season filling the baskets of strawberries, raspberries, or red peppers, and small cucumbers for pickling. She seldom used the hoe or

rake and I never saw her dig. All hard work was left for Renaud and his men. But what pleased me most was that Donatienne, alone of all the women, was fond of singing, and I took great delight in hearing her *chansons*, ballads we would say in English, and strange to say, they were usually military ballads. The glory of Napoleon was then so great that even peasant women celebrated it by their songs. I can still repeat some scraps of Donatienne's verses. Donatienne could sing of military glory, but the other women never joined her in her songs, and it is possible that what they heard brought sad recollections to their memories.

Renaud was very different from his sister. He seldom took me in his arms, though he sometimes tossed me up for a moment and then left me sprawling on the ground. He was too busy to play with anyone, even with a baby. He was not rough, however, and I have still a vivid recollection of the pleasure I felt, when I saw him climb up a tall cherry tree, of which there was a large number. I ran to the foot of the tree, for I knew that in picking the cherries he would drop handfuls of them into my cap. However, he excited in me feelings of awe rather than those of love, because he was so intent on his work that he could not spare time to play with me. A very young child is too selfish to like what has no relation to itself; his incessant activity while handling the spade, or the hoe, or the pruning knife impressed me. To climb up trees, to jump over walls and hedges, to rapidly drag a handful of large cabbages or freshly cut artichokes, to hew down heavy pieces of timber, or roll away rocks and boulders which encumbered the ground, appeared to him more pastime rather than hard labor.

With this physical activity Renaud Richard combined a moral worth which I could not appreciate at that time, but which greatly impressed me when I reflected on it afterwards. The goodness of his heart was shown by his gentleness to dumb animals. I never saw him inflict pain on dogs, cats, cattle or birds. Birds were his especial pets, but he wanted them free. There was no cage at the door of the cottage to imprison goldfinches and black-birds, as is often the case in France. Renaud would not have suffered it. The gardens, meadows, pastures and shrubbery were full of little songsters, who built their nests in all the bushes and under the eaves of the cottages. These were never allowed to be disturbed. I still remember the lesson Renaud gave me one day, when he showed me a nest, the first I ever saw. It was that of a little wren who had established her quarters in a half-rotten stump, scarcely two feet from the ground. The entrance to the nest had been lined with fresh moss, looking more like velvet than decaying leaves. As the sun's rays were shining over the spot, I could perceive a few tiny eggs resting on a little bed of the softest down. The mother had just left when we approached, and she was fluttering around our heads trying to chase us away. "Gus," said Renaud, "you have never seen a wren's nest—here is one; but don't touch it and never come in the neighborhood when I or Donatienne are not with you. God would be angry if you would deprive them of their liberty. They will all come to sing around our house next spring, and it is better to allow them to go and come as they choose."

The noise of the exterior world never reached our happy seclusion, and yet it is difficult to say whether

there was ever a more stirring time in Europe than Napoleon's reign. I never saw a newspaper in the place. I could not say now if any of the inmates knew how to read. If they had any books they must have been prayer books which they took to church on Sundays. For they were very careful to go to church every Sunday morning. Donatienne never took me thither, so that I never saw the interior at that time.

The family, it is true, went to market every week-day, and they must there have met many people ready to tell them the news of the day. The honest folks of our house were not gossips, and they did not at night discuss the news of the morning. When a great French victory had been announced, the news came to them from the market-place. A few words were said on the subject and that was the end of it. It may be worth while to say a few words about the leisure time which they had on Sundays, and every evening after work on week-days. On such occasions, they chatted together, either outside, seated on the ground, or in the house when the weather was not propitious. For I assure my readers that they were very sociable people as well as very industrious.

They dined at noon, but as they were very fatigued they snatched their meal hastily and then took their *méridienne*. This, which is called in Spain and Italy *siesta*, consisted of a sound sleep of an hour's duration. They did not undress and go to bed, but stretched themselves on the floor of the house when it rained, or in the grass in fine weather.

On week-days the only time these good people had for relaxation was after supper, when they had finished their work and packed up in large baskets the vegetables

and fruits they were to carry to town the following morning. Supper was for them a much more enjoyable meal than dinner, at which they exchanged their views and experiences. As soon as it was over, if the weather was fine, they went outside, but if the weather forbade this, they seated or stretched themselves around the hearth. Their talk was often lively, and they had their fun. If they occasionally disagreed, it never came to open dispute. Had there been any danger of this, Mother Richard was there and her presence would have prevented any quarrel. They generally spoke of the daily happenings of the neighborhood; who was sick or dead, or about to marry; what accidents had taken place from runaway horses, or furious bulls or mad dogs; what strange animals had been seen running the country at night, for those simple people were somewhat superstitious and believed in *loups garous*. They talked also of the outlook for the crops; whether the drought or rainy weather would injure them, etc.

When the conversation took place in the house, I heard but little of it: Donatienne soon took me to my cot, made me say a few prayers, and put me to bed, of course I could hear all that was said, but it did not interest me, and I soon fell asleep. When the fine weather in the long summer evenings allowed us to go out, there was a spot in the front of the house under some shade trees which seemed to be made for the occasion. From it, we had a view of the southern sky, and most beautiful stars were shining over us in heaven; I can bear testimony that peasants speak oftener of them than people generally believe. They had, undoubtedly, strange notions of astronomy, and I had afterwards to correct many I then received. On the other hand,

I had a great deal of trouble to dispel some of the pretty notions the Richards infused into my head; for instance that shooting stars were holy souls escaping from Purgatory, that the milky way is a high-road ending at the entrance to heaven, paved consequently with stars, which are the precious stones St. John describes in the Apocalypse, and that the constellation which the Greeks so foolishly called "the Northern Bear" is in fact the royal chariot of King David, whose immortal songs entitled him to the right of enjoying an eternal drive in heaven.

There were also many little things all around us which occupied our attention. The first summer I spent there, I remember, I was strongly attracted by the sight of the glow-worms. Those beautiful insects, in Europe, have no wings and cannot fly as gracefully as they do in America, but on that very account children, even babies, can easily catch them. Our garden was literally full of them from mid-summer till late in September. I was at first afraid to touch them, as I thought they would burn my fingers, but Renaud showed me that I had no reason to fear, and I determined at once to become the happy possessor of a troop of them. In Europe they remain wherever you put them, either on the grass or on a level surface, and they do not creep away immediately. Now, there was in front of our house a strong post driven in the ground, with wooden spikes stuck in it, on which were hung, head downwards, the earthen vessels used in the cottage for milk or water. In that position their lower surface was kept up almost level, so that I could dispose my little pets in the order I chose. I first placed them in a circle around the outer edge of the milk pails, and this at

once produced a beautiful circular illumination. Then I caught others, which I arranged in the form of a cross enclosed in a circle; and as the figures could be varied at will, I had a very amusing occupation for my evening recreation. Everyone around me admired my skill and encouraged me to persevere, as they had never seen the like before, and no little boy in the neighborhood had done the same to their knowledge.

Simple pleasures, at that time, replaced for this artless people the nightly carousals which, it seems, have become the custom in France even in the most retired parts of the country. What have the peasants of to-day gained by meddling with politics, reading the low newspapers published in small towns, and listening to the declamations of some dangerous fools who pretend to enlighten them?

On Sundays, as the farmers had not yet learned to desecrate the day by labor in the country places, except around Paris, there were perfect quiet and repose on Mother Richard's premises. The hired servants remained at home with their friends and relatives. The company in our cottage was strictly confined to the family. I spent the greater part of the morning in my little cot like a pagan and did not get up until the good people came back from church. After breakfast, Donatienne and Renaud took me with them on the farm, to let me look at the places I could not see during the week. It was on such occasions that I admired the long avenue of Lombardy poplars and the green fields, but above all, the picturesque Erdre River, to which I took a great liking, and on which, in after days, I often rowed my boat with my college friends.

The Erdre is a strange-looking stream, most beautiful

in many localities, and chiefly remarkable for the ruins of several old castles on its banks. Among these castles the most important is that of Blue-Beard, for he, it seems, was a famous Baron of Nantes. The river flows from the north, that is, from the interior of Brittany, and empties into the Loire, not far from the harbor where the foreign trade of Nantes is chiefly carried on. But as long as I remained at Mother Richard's I knew nothing of that stream except the small part which was in sight from the edge of our pasture grounds. On Sunday afternoons we often sat in the shade of some wild bushes or stunted trees, and could enjoy the view of the opposite bank, which was dotted with many rustic cottages like our own, or by stately and aristocratic mansions.

It was there that I first heard of the church ceremonies which Donatienne and Renaud had witnessed in the morning. They spoke of them with the greatest seriousness and respect. However, occasionally, my good nurse, who had naturally a vein of humor if not a little malice, sometimes prattled rather freely about incidents which had fallen under her observation. Peculiarities of dress, of looks, of demeanor, on the part of the congregation, were the chief objects of her innocent fun. Nay, more, *Monsieur le curé* himself and his *vicaire* were not always spared, and now and then their appearance or remarks as commented upon by Donatienne seemed to me very ludicrous. One morning Donatienne found fault with the dress worn by *Monsieur le curé* or his *vicaire*. I was surprised, because I had never heard from her anything so improper; and I said that, as I intended to be a priest, I would dress like *Monsieur le curé*. "Very well, little Gussy," she replied; "you

will look rather odd with a three-cornered hat on your head!" It happened that a few days before, perhaps the previous Sunday, I had openly stated my reprobation of such an outlandish headgear, and I had nothing to reply. I was going to cry, when the good girl, repressing a laugh, took me in her arms and petting me gently, said, "Don't mind that, Gussy, I will arrange the hat so nicely with ribbons and flowers that all the little girls will run after you." I was simple enough to be reassured by this promise.

It would not be proper to consider this as the staple of our conversation on Sundays. I know that what I generally heard and saw from my nurse considerably increased my respect for religion and holy things, and when I left her for good there remained in my soul only germs of piety and true Christian feelings. This was the way we enjoyed our Sunday mornings. When my parents came to see me every Sunday afternoon they merely joined Mother Richard's company; and thus the day was always most pleasant for all the inmates of the cottage.

I will now speak of the honesty which was at that time so remarkable among the peasant class in France. The French peasants could not keep accounts, as none of them could write, and they received every morning the price of what they had carried to market. They brought this home in their pockets, usually in pennies. The whole bulk of this variegated bullion was handed over to Mother Richard as soon as they returned home.

Beside the bed and table there were in the room several *bahuts*—as they were called in the country, that is, heavy oaken chests in which were deposited the garments, linen and small utensils. One of them must

have been Mother Richard's safe, and probably this had a key. That was all the precaution taken against thieves. The money remained in this chest until the day of sorting, counting, and apportioning (as will be presently described) which happened, I suppose, twice in a year, *à la St. Jean et à la St. Michel.* Everybody in the house, even among the servants, certainly knew where the chest was and what it contained. Still I never heard that a penny was missed. Donatienne and Renaud, no doubt, could get the key unknown to their mother, and take away what in other places might have been called a compensation for their services. The thought never came to their minds; or if they were exposed to the temptation, they certainly resisted it. This was the state of things in most of all the small farmer's cottages all over France, and if courts of justice had occasionally to punish small thieves and pickpockets, it happened very seldom.

The parvenu family that owned the farm at this time, and their predecessors the Baudrys, had rented this property to the Richards for more than twenty years. In general such property was held by the peasant on condition of paying one-third, or one-half, of the produce to the proprietor. When the Richards put into their chest the daily receipts from the market, their purpose was to divide the produce of the farm uprightly with their landlord.

On one occasion when the division was made I entered the room when the allotment began and they did not send me away. Mother Richard was seated at the end of the table, calm and dignified as usual. Donatienne and Renaud were with her; and the young man brought in a large canvas pouch containing the currency, taken

by him from the chest. They sorted on one side the silver pieces of various sizes, and placed the pennies on the other. The count took up a great part of the day, but I remained only a short time, as I preferred to go to play outside. When I returned toward the end of the count, I heard Mother Richard speak of the silver as being the landlord's share. The latter, it appears, had such implicit confidence in his tenants that their word took the place of all written accounts. This was the patriarchal way of doing business in the neighborhood of Nantes in 1811 or 1812. I do not mean to say that all the small farms of the country were carried on in the same manner as that of Mother Richard's. In many others, no doubt, a fixed sum of money was exacted from the peasants every year, good, bad, or indifferent; but I have no doubt that the method of working the land on shares prevailed in the greater part of France.

With a few exceptions the Revolution had brought no great changes among the peasants. The turmoil of politics had not reached them, and they never saw a newspaper; schoolmasters and *gardes champêtres* were not arrayed in opposition to the priests; propagators of Socialistic doctrines had not yet appeared in villages and hamlets; the catechism and the almanacs were still the only books that could be found in the cottage of the peasant; the simplicity of manners was what it had always been. I know from personal experience that this is true of the whole of Brittany, Anjou, Maine, Poitou and Limousin. I never heard that in the east and south of France the rural population was much different from the farmers of the north and west. But a number of the *Correspondant* for this year (1878) states

on good authority that this continued so throughout the rural districts of France till 1830.

The most striking feature in the lives of my rustic hosts was labor, hard labor certainly, but not degrading labor, such as we meet with in factories and workshops. In summer from three in the morning until sunset there was scarcely any intermission, except the hour's sleep after dinner, and in Nantes the sun set after eight o'clock. Digging, harrowing, cutting down trees, carting away stones and rubbish, lifting heavy weights, etc., were the constant occupation of Renaud and his men. Reaping the crops, gathering the vegetables and fruits, weeding the garden beds and thinning the rows of plants, filling the baskets that were to be carried to the markets, etc., furnished occupation to Donatienne and the girls who helped her. But there was a bright sun overhead, and a carpet of grass under their feet; the song of birds and the humming of insects could be heard the whole day; if there was a shower it did not last long and gave them a rest.

There are persons who think that peasants are incapable of feeling nature's beauty, and experiencing the sweet emotions which arise from its contemplation. They completely misunderstand the character of country people, at least in France. These simple rustics were not artificial shepherds and shepherdesses created by the idyllic poets of the eighteenth century and depicted by them in languid verses. On the other hand, they were not the stupid and stolid barbarians described by a La Bruyère. There were among them, no doubt, some few dull specimens with little intelligence. This may be said of all classes of society, even of the rich and educated. But God is no more sparing of His intellectual

and moral gifts to the poor than to those who live in affluence, and there are as bright babies born every day under the thatched roofs of peasants' huts, as in the gilded rooms of a purse-proud aristocracy.

Tell me, why in every country cottage on a summer evening, when the rosin candle dimly burned in the chimney-corner, you heard the crickets chirping under the hearthstone? They were never heard in the mansions of the wealthy except perhaps down in the kitchen, where a country-born cook held sway. Had you asked the rustic good wife why she did not kill the intolerable chirpers she would have risen in indignation: "Kill the crickets! What do you mean? How could we be cheerful without them? If they were not here we would bring them in from the garden, in order not to remain buried in solitude and silence. Kill the crickets! We might as well kill you for making such a barbarous proposal. Your absence would not be so great a loss as that of those little creatures, always so joyful and lively, that constantly teach us to be joyful and lively likewise. Kill the crickets! I never expected to hear such a word in this house, and I hope it will not be repeated."

This and much more would the grumbler have heard in every cottage from St. Malo in the north to the foot of the Pyrenees in the south. This love of the cricket shows that the French peasants were not bereft of appreciation, of sympathy with the life of nature.

We do not claim that they had any artistic feeling. We have already seen how sensitive they were to the beauties of the starry heavens. There is one conceit relating to the stars which I have forgotten to mention. It refers to the stars which the astronomers call "the

Belt of Orion." It is composed of three beautiful stars equidistant from one another. The Vendeans say that they are the souls of the "three wise men from the East!" This constellation shines for us during the long evenings of January. At the time of the Epiphany it is the most brilliant group of stars that you can see in the northern hemisphere. This proved that they were the Magi. What could be the reason of their appearing at that time but to do honor to the Christmas season and adore the Infant King, who had just been born!

The moon, too, had a great significance for them. How could the peasants see her, so regular in her irregularities, without thinking that she had been made especially for them? She ruled over all their laborious occupations. They consulted her increase and decrease for sowing, tilling, and harvesting. How could you have a crop of beans, or large and plump cauliflowers, if you sowed them when she was on the wane? Your vegetables would surely dwindle away together with her, as it was from her they received the influence that made them grow.

Besides the glories of the heavens the peasants also admired the beauty of the earth. They had it constantly under their eyes, and what he constantly sees does not strike the beholder so forcibly. Still they were far from being insensible to whatever fell under their eyes. You felt it in a thousand ways. A fine morning was sure to bring from their lips expressions of delight and occasionally of admiration; an extraordinary production of nature, such as a fruit or blossoms much larger than usual, or a pumpkin vine covering a vast extent of ground, was always a cause of surprise

and occasionally excited lively discussions among them. Most of them certainly preferred the country to the town, on account of the brightness of the one contrasted with the gloom of the other. At my age, I was of course less impressed by the outside world than they were. Yet I am perfectly sure that when I was transported to that pleasure garden, and suddenly placed in the midst of it, my still dormant soul was suddenly entranced with delight, and I felt I had gone to heaven.

I particularly remember one May morning a few weeks after I went to the Richards'. I wandered from the garden to the adjacent meadows, and suddenly found myself immersed, nearly to my neck, in a delightful sea of waving grass and nodding blossoms. The dew was so pleasant when it touched my hands and face; the fragrance of the flowers was for me such a sweet perfume; the harmonious songs of birds all around and over me; the softness of the atmosphere, and the warmth of the sun over my head were so new, so unexpected, so entrancing that if I had not already known that all this was the work of God, I would have adored the sun and worshipped every object around me. There is no exaggeration in all this. I feel it to-day as if it had taken place yesterday. It was the first emotion of this kind that I ever experienced in my life, and on that account it could never be erased from my memory. Were not all the good people with whom I then lived as able as I was to fall under the same spell, and experience the same emotions? And apart from this inference the expressions I often heard from their lips convinced me that they keenly appreciated the simple and chaste beauty of everything about them.

I have still a word to say about the weekly visitors who occupied the landlord's mansion, and rambled at will in the flower garden in front of it. The reader knows why they have been called the parvenu family. They were seen outside of their own grounds only when they arrived and departed. I was too young at the time to give myself an account of their strange proceedings, but later on I have often mused on them, and could never find an explanation except in the inward workings of their guilty consciences. The fact is that I never saw them enter Mother Richard's cottage to pay at least an occasional visit to that venerable old woman. They never seemed desirous to make me play with their own children; they had two or three young ones. Once only they met me when they came into their own flower garden, where I must have gone to look at the bright insects that were buried in the velvety flesh-colored petals of the roses.

Whenever my parents came in October to bring me back to the city for the winter, I expressed a strong wish to remain with Donatienne. But I had to go; in fact I did not dislike the school of either M. Houdebine or Madame Pouliguen. Meanwhile I was growing fat, and after three summers I was a sturdy, vigorous youngster, and here I am still alive and wide awake at the wrong end of three-quarters of a century.

CHAPTER II

THE RESTORATION OF THE BOURBONS—1814 TO 1830—THE WELCOME GIVEN TO THEM IN FRANCE ON THEIR FIRST RETURN

When Napoleon abdicated, in the spring of 1814, I was still at Madame Pouliguen's school; and it is from her house rather than from my own home that I witnessed the explosion of enthusiasm which welcomed the Bourbons the first time they returned to France. Liberal writers assert that as they were restored by the arms of England, Russia and Prussia the nation received them with distrust and dislike. This was certainly not the case at Nantes. The Corsican's downfall was so sudden that the French people were taken by surprise. They had to a great extent forgotten the Bourbons during the Emperor's glorious career. For a decade the Bonaparte dynasty seemed to be permanently seated on the throne and a great part of that time the immense majority of the nation would have resisted any attempt to restore the Bourbons. But with the terrible disaster in Russia, the loss of all her allies in Germany and Italy, the appalling defeats in Saxony and on the Rhine, France had lost all confidence in her Emperor, and wished only for peace and rest. After some hesitation, therefore, considering that with Louis XVIII she would have a parliamentary government, which she never had under Bonaparte's rule, and would

also enjoy the advantage of foreign commerce, of which she had been deprived since the days of the Consulate, she finally opened her heart to the recollection of a long line of kings whom formerly she had ardently loved and fondly obeyed. The Royalists, who now began to form a party, claimed a monopoly of the public happiness, and almost excluded from the nation those who did not belong to their side. I am convinced that this feeling, though unconscious in many of them, inspired their doings, and became the cause of their subsequent loss of power and influence—a great misfortune for France, from which she suffers to our day. Had the Royalists been wise they would have taken note of the public expressions of joy which suddenly burst forth all over the country; they would have considered these as tokens of the sincere return of their countrymen to their allegiance and hailed them as the harbingers of happiness. Then there would have been no need of speaking of parties any longer. Unfortunately this did not serve the views of some ardent Royalists, who soon began to adopt openly the name of *Royalistes quand même*, meaning that they would stick to the party as a party, even in case the King threw cold water upon it. The following January the nation gave a still more marked proof of its loyalty to the Bourbons at the first celebration of the anniversary of the funeral of Louis XVI.

I cannot fix the exact date of this celebration in my native city. In Nantes preparations were made for it by all the citizens. I remember that in many houses I saw the people engaged in preparing white flags and cutting out large *fleur-de-lis* of gold paper. I heard that on the festive day there would be a flag displayed

from every window in the city. I am sure that the four windows of our own house in the Basse Grand Rue were decorated with four large flags prepared with *les armes de France* in the centre, and a number of *fleur-de-lis* all around. At night, of course, lampions were to be lighted at all the windows, with a large transparency in one of them.

The rejoicings lasted three days and nights, and I am sure that they might have lasted a full week without the enthusiasm of the people lessening. Guns were fired at ten in the morning, but no bells were rung. It was only much later that I learned the reason of it. The church bells did not ring because besides a Te Deum at the cathedral no religious ceremony had been announced in the programme, and this perhaps was wisely done, for reasons which will be better appreciated later on. The streets were soon alive with people, and as in France the military must always take the lead in National ceremonies, they soon filled the streets. It must be remarked that at the first restoration, the foreign armies which had invaded the country did not appear anywhere except in Paris. In 1814 no foreign soldiers were seen in Nantes, and there were but few French soldiers. The troops that were to be seen were mainly improvised militia, to which they gave the name of *Gardes Urbaines*. I remember that my father wore his uniform, and from that time down to the return of Napoleon from Elba, he regularly mounted guard, which, however, did not please my mother over much. The name *Gardes Nationales* was no longer used, as it would have recalled too many revolutionary scenes which it was better to forget. In all these proceedings there was certainly a great deal of good sense and good nature.

Why was not the great bell from the Bouffey Tower set a-ringing to call the soldiers? I learned the reason long after. It was not until the revolution of 1830 that it was used for civic purposes such as public elections, call of the military, etc. My father's exclamation on its ringing thus for the first time explains why it was not tolled on the return of the Bourbons. "Hear, my son," he said to me in 1830, "that infamous bell of 1793; It looks to me as if Carrier were here again to order his meetings of the populace, and his massacres of the Vendeans." The memory of the Revolution was still so fresh, and excited such universal horror, that everything that brought it back to the mind was reprobated and abhorred. The sound of that bell could not find any place in the programme of 1814.

Before noon of this first joyful day, the city was aglow with animation and excitement; all the stores were closed; the whole population was in the streets; nobody had gone from the town to the country except some discontented Bonapartists. But a large number of people had arrived from the country. The *Gardes Urbaines*, improvised by the people themselves, were flocking to their various places of meeting, previous to the grand review that was to take place early in the afternoon. Evidently, all this came from the citizens' hearts, and it was not the cold fulfilment of a programme dictated by the new government. But what struck me most and remained forever impressed on my imagination and preserved in my memory were the night celebrations.

There were fireworks, it is true, but no boy was allowed to fire guns or pistols, as they do in the United States. Besides the general illumination from all

windows, bonfires were lighted soon after sunset in nearly all the public squares and *carrefours* of the city, and were fed with brushwood all the night long. Around them wild dances were organized with an incredible animation, if not positive enthusiasm. True, I saw this particularly in that part of the city where the nobility resided; but they were not alone to join in the dance; common people danced with them, and I learned that on that occasion counts joined hands with apple-women and viscountesses danced with workingmen and artisans.

The City of Nantes could be said to be composed of two very distinct parts. The eastern side, clustering around St. Pierre's Cathedral and the Château, formed the old town, filled with quaint mediæval hotels, where the Nantes nobility had dwelt since the time of the Crusades, and which they occupied again on their return from exile. Around them were many small tradesmen and workingmen of every description. There was then no hostility between two classes of people so different from each other. The noble families purchased what they needed from the small tradesmen around, and very seldom, I am sure, sent their servants to the western part of the city. It was very remarkable that, in 1814, religious feelings pervaded not only the aristocratic class, but also the lower orders. I remember well a fact which I often observed on Sundays. When one walked from the eastern to the western end of the town, he was sure to find all the stores closed around the Cathedral and the Château. Arrived at the centre of the city, he saw half of them open; towards the west, the further he went, the more the place had a week-day appearance. The people here, evidently, had no idea of religion.

The western side was mainly inhabited by *le grand commerce*, as it was called, that is, the importers and wholesale merchants, who lived in the neighborhood of their counting houses or in country villas near the city. All the heavy shipping required for the foreign trade found deep water in that western part of the Loire. As there had been no foreign trade under Napoleon, because England held the sea, that class of merchants had suffered considerably during the whole of his reign, and could not but rejoice at the prospect of peace, which would surely bring back to them times of prosperity. They rejoiced with all France; but I must say that the dancing and wild enthusiasm was particularly visible on the eastern side.

The school of Madame Pouliguen was in the centre of the noblemen's quarter, although the good lady had no scion of nobility among her pupils. Of course her school was closed during the three days of public rejoicing, but on the first evening I thought of paying her a visit, as I was sure that she was not in the streets like the bulk of the population, but kept her rooms, where she must have thought her evil days were at an end. As I expected, she received me with open arms. "So you are happy, Gussy," she said, "and I am happy too. A year ago, I never imagined that good times would come so soon, and we must thank God that He has so unexpectedly delivered us. But how long have your parents allowed you to stay out?" "My mother told me," I replied, "that I could stay out as long as I liked, provided I did not get lost in the crowd." This might appear rather imprudent on the part of my mother, but she knew I could take care of myself, and I had promised her I would be home before ten. The days

were then long, and it was still almost daylight at nine. "Very well," exclaimed the good lady," the neighbors are going to celebrate at dusk, and you must not go to any other part of the city."

The excellent woman seldom went out except to go to church; still she occasionally saw some friends of her immediate neighborhood, among them some noble families reduced in circumstances, owing to the confiscation of their property during the Revolution. Several of them lived in the same street just opposite her school; I remember the name of two only, the de Bires and de Carcados. They were most sociable people, apparently not soured by the injustice they had suffered, but ever ready to enjoy life and associate with their fellow-sufferers. Madame de Bire had told Madame Pouliguen that with the help of some friends she had arranged everything for a public dance at the other end of the street. There was at that place a *carrefour*, or open ground at the meeting of three streets, and large piles of firewood had been heaped up for a bonfire, and barrels of lemonade were brought to a house at one of the corners. I remained with the ex-nun till the fun began.

Dusk came in a little before nine and soon people were busy all around, lighting the lampions at the windows. Already music was heard and dancing had evidently commenced at the other end of the street. I bade a hasty farewell to the old lady, and soon was in the street, where I found a dense crowd. They were all going towards the *carrefour* at an angle of which stood one of the largest private mansions of the neighborhood. It was in its court-yard that the lemonade and other refreshments had been prepared and placed under the charge of the family's servants. The fourth side of the

large quadrangle was formed by a high wall of a chaste architectural design, running along the street, with a large double portal in the centre wide open at that moment, through which crowds of people went in or came out, with as little concern as if it had been their private dwelling. Innumerable lampions profusely distributed in front of all the houses in the street, at all the numerous windows of the big mansion, all along the high wall in the front, and around the wide-open gate, shed a light as brilliant as that of noon. The enormous bonfire of the *carrefour*, meanwhile, was crackling and blazing, and sending to heaven volumes of flames and of a light-tinted smoke, forming a gigantic canopy in the blue atmosphere, the only cloud, in fact which could be perceived in the sky.

But how could I describe the wild scene around the bonfire? All kinds of costumes were there to be seen, from that of the peasant women, who had come during the day from the neighboring villages, or that of the plain artisans of the city, and of burghers with their wives, to the simple but tasteful dress of noble ladies or gallant gentlemen who appeared supremely happy at last to enjoy the frolic of their French homes, after having wandered so many years as exiles in foreign countries. How they smiled and laughed, and shook hands, bandied words, and cracked jokes and appeared to have forever forgotten all their former trials and sorrows! I am sure that in the whole street and all the streets around the only woman that remained home was poor Madame Pouliguen. She must have felt sorely tempted to come and dance with the others, but in her own eyes she was still a Carmelite, and she did not think it becoming.

What was chiefly remarkable in that dancing multitude was the natural air prevailing among them all. They looked as if everything was common among them, rank, position, wealth, even education. There was nothing rough and rude in the peasants and workingmen; nothing starched and pretentious in the most refined ladies. Madame de Carcado, one of the jolliest among the crowd, knew me, because she had consented three or four years before to be godmother to a younger brother of mine, and she came occasionally to my mother's house to see and pet her little godson and have a talk with us generally. As soon as she saw me, she left her place in the circle—they were dancing what is called in French *une ronde* (ring dance) all holding one another by the hand and singing a simple ditty. Taking me by the hand she said that in the courtyard, beside the lemonade, I could have some *sucre d'orge* and *sucre de pomme*, of which there was a supply for the children.

This little incident suggests a few words on the character of the nobility in France before and after the Revolution. So much evil has been said of them by people who never knew them, that I feel it a duty to describe them as I knew them for many years during my boyhood and youth. For I had the best opportunity to judge of their good qualities and defects. I had these opportunities, not only in my boyhood, not only immediately after my ordination, when for twelve months I was curate of St. Clement's parish in Nantes, which contained most of the noble families of the city, but particularly during my college life, when I was thrown among many boys of noble extraction, some of them bearing the noblest names in France.

The Bourbons had preserved the French University as it had been organized by Napoleon. The colleges, or institutions for secondary instruction, were no longer called Lycées, but Collèges Royaux. Everything else remained the same. The religious training of the pupils was very defective, and the conduct of the great majority of the students was far from edifying. Most of them belonged to the middle-class, which was already profoundly irreligious, and, it must be said, immoral. The noble class in Brittany and Anjou, at least, was for the most part Christian. Those who before the French Revolution had been for the most part infidels, had received such a severe lesson that they had all returned to the religion of their fathers. They would not send their children to be educated in the Collèges Royaux. Liberty of education did not exist any more after than before the fall of the Empire; and consequently none of those Catholic colleges which now flourish in France existed. The only resource left to Christian families were the Petit Séminaires, established by the bishop, with the consent of the government, for boys who felt a vocation for the ecclesiastical state. The government had not forbidden the bishops to receive other boys in these institutions, and parents desiring a Christian education for their boys were allowed to send them to the Petit Séminaire.

The pupils of the Petit Séminaire of Nantes were composed of two classes of boys very dissimilar. Half of them were the sons of noblemen, the other half the sons of peasants. The number of city children born of the bourgeois class was quite insignificant. I belonged to this class, and I do not believe that we were ever more than a dozen out of some four hundred students.

This became quite apparent whenever the lists of places in competitions were read in the classes. In general the first half of every list contained the names of peasant students, the second half, the names of boys with the particle *de* prefixed. I say mostly, for there were often exceptions to the rule. In a certain number of classes the leaders were noblemen's sons; in all there was a good sprinkling of historic names among the first of the class. I say historic names, for in our Petit Séminaire at least, some of the best families of France were always represented, as the d'Estrees, the Larochefoucaulds, the d'Armailles, the d'Andignes, etc. I would not be understood to suggest that there were more brains in the peasant boys' heads than in those of the others. There was certainly greater refinement of manner in the young aristocrats, and also much greater refinement of language. Those among them who worked were sure to occupy a high rank in their class, and generally, I think, the boys of nobility were not deficient in talent. But many of them evidently thought that it was useless for them to work, as they had not to make their way in the world, and that their ancestors had placed them in a position which they could not forfeit.

To these boys the French Revolution had carried no lesson, and so they remained behind in their studies. But I am here speaking not of their brains and intellect, but of their good hearts and high social qualities. There is no doubt that the French nobility, such as I knew it, were endowed with true generosity and high social qualities. Far from being haughty, they were free from all pretences, they showed much good nature, and great affability in their intercourse with their fellow-students,

even with those of the lowest social rank. Had the young nobles been otherwise there would have been a constant cause of quarrel and fights. But during a six-years' stay at the Petit Séminaire, I never witnessed a single quarrel between the nobles and the peasants. The expression "son of a peasant" was never used as a slur upon peasants or *roturiers*.

No distinction was made between class and class. It is true the young aristocrats clubbed together, as did the sons of the workingmen. But this arose from the fact that each class preferred its own topics of conversation, and the boys did not notice the distinction of classes. This appeared as soon as a game was started, such as a *partie de barres* or of cricket. Immediately all intermingled, and social rank was ignored in selecting the partners. What gave distinction to a boy was not his name, nor his aristocratic bearing, but his high standing in class, or his conspicuous success in the athletic sports of the play-ground.

This fact became even clearer to me in after life, particularly during the twelve months I spent as curate at St. Clement's. The noble families that dwelt during the winter at Nantes—they all passed the whole summer in the country—mostly belonged to St. Clement's, and as they all practised their religion, the parish clergy had frequent intercourse with them, and saw them often not only in church or at the pastor's residence, but in their own houses, where the priests were frequently invited to dine. Several of us even had a standing invitation from some of these families; and if we called in at mealtime we were immediately asked to occupy the best seat at the table. To attribute to them arrogance, haughtiness, pretensions of any sort would be sheer

calumny: and all I have seen of their home life was greatly to their honor.

If some of them belonged to those royalists who considered the nation to be rotten and who claimed that there was nothing good outside of their class, this was far from being universally true. In fact these were relatively few. It must be confessed that they had some reasons for this opinion when they reviewed the national excesses of the last twenty years. Only they failed to see that just then a change was taking place which they did not sufficiently appreciate. But even the most extreme aristocrats were in their private life models of simplicity and good nature, disposed to acknowledge good wherever they found it, invariably inclined to oblige others, not only most sociable with their equals, but particularly affable to their servants and to the poor. Whoever gainsays this does not know them, or is prejudiced against them, which unfortunately is more likely to be the case in France perhaps than in any other country.

But this digression seems to have made us forget the night rejoicings of May, 1814, to which it is time to come back. What was taking place in Rue Notre Dame, at Nantes, between noble ladies and peasant women and between counts and artisans, was during that night repeated on nearly every square or *carrefour* of the great city. But I had promised my mother to be home at ten, and could dispose of one hour only for my observations. On my way home, however, I saw the same merry-making everywhere. Dances, songs, bonfires, flags, illuminations, were the order, not of the day, but of the night. When I arrived home the whole family was out, and I do not remember how long I

had to wait for their coming. The only thing still fresh in memory is that after I went to bed I could not sleep until very late on account of the noise, the light, the music of the brass bands and the more discordant sounds made by the organ-grinders. Nantes was not exceptional in this, and similar rejoicings were going on everywhere else in France. But I speak only of what fell under my own personal observation, and I infer that France did not receive the Bourbons with distrust and dislike. This is confirmed by the description of the funeral ceremonies which were celebrated all over the country on the 21st of January, 1815, the anniversary of the murder of Louis XVI.

It had been previously announced in Nantes that there would be a suspension of business on that day, and I have never seen such complete rest observed in that city, even on the most solemn religious festivals, such as those of Easter and Christmas. I saw a great part of the town, and not a store was open nor a business cart in the streets. The citizens had prepared flags of a peculiar description, very different from those used in May. The flag was bordered with a broad strip of black crepe, and instead of the arms of France in the middle and *fleur-de-lis* around, the whole bunting was literally covered with emblems of tears made of silver paper. The French generally scatter these symbolic drops all over the draperies used in mourning, and the artistic effect is in good taste and well adapted to the occasion. Millions of those little bits of silver paper must have been cut in Nantes in the days previous to the ceremony. I can attest that after several attempts to discover a single window without its mourning flag, I gave up the search and childishly concluded that

there was not a single bad Frenchman in the whole city.

The day was propitious and exactly suited the mournful occasion. It did not rain and snow did not fall; but on the other hand, the sun did not show its face and a thick black mist spread like a pall over the whole atmosphere. No tramping military patrolled the streets, no drum nor music was heard, and the multitude which filled the public squares and the thoroughfares spoke with bated breath and appeared to be in unison with nature in soberness of tone and solemnity of demeanor. Even to-day, sixty-four years after, all those circumstances are still vividly impressed on my imagination and memory as if it was but yesterday.

No bell was heard from the churches except that of the Cathedral. It was *le grand bourdon trente mille livres pesant,* and the solemn voice sounded through the universal hush of all other voices, like God's call addressed to all indiscriminately, urging them to His holy temple to ask forgiveness for a great national iniquity, in which many of them had more or less participated, at least in intention. About ten o'clock in the forenoon, all the citizens of Nantes were walking silently towards the universal goal of attraction. When our family—father, mother, three brothers and myself, reached the irregular square on which St. Pierre's Cathedral is built, the whole church was already crowded with people, and it was absolutely impossible for us to obtain admittance. Yet the edifice is vast; and though the large circular space in back of the sanctuary had then remained unfinished since the remote time of Anne de Bretagne, the nave and the aisles alone could contain many thousands of persons standing or kneeling. It is

only since I left Nantes that the pile has been completed.

I did not witness the solemn rites performed in the interior, and I did not hear who presided at them, as there was then no bishop in Nantes, Duvoisin, the last, having died only a couple of years previously. But I heard a great deal of the funeral oration which was preached by M. de Beauregard, *curé* Ste. Croix, whom in after life I knew intimately. He spoke at length of the causes of the Revolution, and did not fear to point his finger at the chief of them, namely, the demoralizing philosophy which had prepared it. Nobody that I know contradicted the speaker in the public papers which on the following day gave an account of this important event.

The fact is that everything connected with it proved that revolutionary principles were openly renounced by the people of Nantes. Although that city preserved for a long time a reputation of royalism which, perhaps, it never really deserved, still it was well known previously that many of its inhabitants had been ardent revolutionists. Few, perhaps, approved Carrier's excesses, although that monster found some of his tools among them. But it could not be denied that many of the Nantese had taken sides against the Vendeans in the struggle which ensued. On the day of the first funeral service in honor of the royal victim, all acknowledged their error, and made a public profession of repentance honorable to them and edifying to all.

One of the worst features of the Revolution had been a bloody persecution of Catholicism, but this in itself could not be a permanent evil, and might in the end have been beneficial, since previous history has invariably

proved that the religion of Christ grows stronger under persecution. Unfortunately, the upper classes of the nation and a great part of the *bourgeoisie* had previously imbibed the poison of infidelity; and the philosophical doctrines, as they were called, insidious at first, and wearing the mask of hypocrisy, became, at last, plain and outspoken, finally assuming the form of naked materialism and atheism. It is well known that during a certain time the name of God could not be pronounced in a public speech by the lips of a layman, without creating wonder; and it was considered a great proof of courage on the part of the eminent mineralogist, l'abbé Harvy, that he had once used in his course of public lectures, the expression *l'Auteur de la Nature.* But this subversion of good sense scarcely extended further than the educated classes, as is the case to-day, and has been for many years past.

I remember that until I was twelve or fourteen years of age, the churches of Nantes contained on Sundays nearly as many men as women. But from that time, say 1820, the number of men diminished gradually and constantly, until in 1835 you could scarcely see a half a dozen men at high Mass, in any church, even if more than two thousand people were present at divine service. Who is to blame for this change?

Something has been said of the religious policy of Napoleon, and in its developed form it cannot have our sympathy. If he had succeeded in establishing his dynasty on the throne, and his successors had followed the same line of conduct, the French Church might very well have gradually fallen into schism, or something very like it. He had already a certain number of bishops more devoted to him than to the Pope;

and the natural consequence of his conflict with Pius VII, the successive vacancy of many sees, by the death of the incumbents—as the Pope justly refused to appoint the candidates the Emperor presented—would have brought the hierarchy to a kind of standstill, a state most favorable to the success of a schism. Nevertheless, it can be said that during the whole reign of Napoleon, two measures were strongly insisted upon by him, which could not but be beneficial to religion. He was most strict in preventing newspapers and reviews from openly attacking Christian principles, and he insisted on decorum when they spoke of Church affairs. If he allowed them, or even expected them, to give a false view of his conflict with Pius VII, it was always from the political, not from the religious point of view. During his reign, there is no doubt that religion was, in general, respected in France; and though he purposely restricted many of the works of piety practised in the Church, though he seldom allowed any religious congregation, even of women, to be revived, at least he insisted that what had been settled by the Concordat should be held sacred by journalists and reviewers. Whilst, therefore, the Church was violently attacked by him in the person of the Pontiff, perfect peace prevailed in France in the religious atmosphere, such as it was.

Again, at the same time that he had gathered around him in his court, in his senate, in all the institutions of his empire, a number of men who had formerly written against religion, he insisted that no new book of the kind should be issued, and most strictly prevented the issuing of new editions of the eighteenth century infidel works. The anti-Christian works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and all the other philosophers of

Louis XVIII

the eighteenth century, were, as far as I know, not allowed to be reprinted during the First Empire. It is certainly true that the reading of them, anterior to the Restoration, had not extended much beyond the former circle of their admirers, the professional men and the burghers.

How Napoleon I could enforce those two measures can scarcely be understood, and more than his conquests, perhaps, they prove the hold he had on the French people so soon after a period of the most complete religious anarchy and unbelief. Louis XVIII was not the man to insist on those two measures; and if he had been it is very doubtful if he could have succeeded. He gave the Charter, and established a parliamentary government, and without positively maintaining that this was the source of the evil, it cannot be doubted, however, that this became the occasion of the remarkable change for the worse which soon appeared all over France.

The chamber of deputies elected directly after the second Restoration in 1815 was strongly religious, and would have passed laws strictly enforcing not only the two chief measures of Napoleon, as we have called them, but others equally or more stringent. But in the opinion of Louis XVIII the majority of the Deputies were not sincerely enough attached to the principles of the Charter, and would have made, perhaps, short work of some of the most important features of a parliamentary government. So the Chamber was dissolved; and the new legislative body elected under the management of Decazes, the King's bosom friend, adopted strong Liberal views, as they began to be called; and a great change was going to take place on the hold religion

was still having on the French people, at least in the lower classes of society.

The law on the press, which was soon drawn up, and in general all the laws subsequently enacted on the same subject, allowed every writer to say of religion what he wished, though the law demanded respect for religion, and every greedy publisher in Paris began to calculate what profits he would make by issuing new editions of Voltaire, Rousseau and their compeers. The number of those new editions during the fifteen years of the Restoration was enormous. I cannot give it with sufficient exactness; but not only France was flooded with them but Spain, Italy, and the American-Spanish republics received all their full complement. Some of those publications were extremely cheap, and one of them, the Voltaire-Touquet, was purposely issued for the lower classes. I remember when a boy of fourteen or fifteen how the great majority of youngsters of my age boasted of the progress they were making in Voltaire's philosophy. There is no doubt in my mind that this baneful result was also considerably promoted by an active propaganda of infidelity undertaken by gentlemen who knew well what they were doing; and since the matter is of extreme importance, a little personal anecdote will not be out of place.

Among my many acquaintances in Nantes I had a friend whom I particularly valued, on account of his gentleness of disposition, strong religious feeling, and amiability of character. His name was Baudouin, and he was the only son of a poor but respectable widow. He had two sisters younger than himself and likewise amiable and good. The mother supported the family by her work, the little girls went to school, and my

friend, though not older than fifteen, helped his mother with a modest salary received as a clerk in one of the largest importing houses of Nantes, that of Dufou. This house received sometimes large shipments of sugar from the French West India Islands, and had it refined in the city, but not in the old Recollet convent of which I previously spoke, but in a refinery which was situated in the suburb of Richebourg.

Young Baudouin was occasionally sent to it with messages; and he thus became acquainted with one of the members of the firm, whose name I have forgotten. This man sought to influence the religious views of young Baudouin by giving him books to read, and before long some of the mildest pamphlets of Voltaire were put into his hands. My poor friend soon began to feel the influence of such reading, and let a few words escape in conversation with me which struck me as strange. Before long the name of Voltaire came out; I knew that Voltaire was the author of very bad books, though I had never read anything of his except the *Henriade*, which everybody in France considered an admirable poem at the time, altogether inoffensive, religiously speaking. I told Baudouin that from what I had heard everything that Voltaire wrote was not proper reading for young men. He said the gentleman who had lent him the books was well informed and in his opinion incapable of doing wrong. I do not remember the rest of the conversation, but the conclusion was that we agreed to go together to pay him a visit. My education was then farther advanced than that of my young friend, and I was at college either in the third or the fourth class. Baudouin knew that I intended to become a clergyman, but I told him expressly that he must not

let it be known to the lender of the books in question, otherwise I would not go to his house.

We therefore went to the Richebourg sugar refinery and were introduced into a very neat office, where the gentleman soon came, and I was presented to him as a *collégien*. I had positively asked my companion not to open his mouth about the Petit Séminaire, where I then studied.

The sugar refiner was a man of forty or forty-five, well dressed and having the exterior of a perfect gentleman. He begged of us to be seated, and thinking, no doubt, that I was a day scholar at the Collège Royal he looked at me with a great deal of interest, thinking, I suppose, that I was higher game than Baudouin. The conversation soon fell on classical education, and I was asked what I had read of French poetry. I replied that I had read a great deal of French poetry, and that I was particularly fond of Corneille's and Racine's tragedies. "And you have not read those of Voltaire?" the gentleman said. "I intend to do so shortly," I replied.

"That is right," he said; "we have no poet like him; he excels in every branch; in tragedy as well as in lighter works. I advise you, my dear young friend, as soon as you have gone through Voltaire's *Théâtre*, that is, his dramatic works, to peruse some of his epistles; they are far better than any of those of Boileau." I confessed to him that I had not perused any poem of Voltaire except his *Henriade*. He smiled and said that this was the poorest of all the works of the great man; and having begged of us to remain alone for a few minutes he went to a cosy little room back of the office, and brought a small volume, which he opened, and he began

to read. The book was the celebrated *Epitre à Julie.*

I had not yet heard of this composition, one of the worst of the Ferney Patriarch, and at the same time one of the cleverest in point of art. It is one of the most violent attacks on Christianity, and Our Divine Saviour and his apostles are treated in it with a refined virulence that has never been surpassed, perhaps, by Voltaire himself. The impression produced on me was indignation against the man who had written such infamous lines. The reader probably noticed it on my face, though I did not say a word; for he began to read with less emphasis, and soon reached the end.

I was going to stand up, take my hat and go away, when the gentleman, seeing his mistake, and thinking that he had probably gone too far, tried to soothe my evident exasperation by remarking that "this was a fine composition in point of art; "*mais après tous*," he added, "*que'est-ce que cela prouvé?*" "*Monsieur*," said I, "*cela prouvé que Voltaire était un coquin*," and standing up, bowed to him, took Baudouin by the hand, and left the house.

In the street poor Baudouin did not know what to say; so I began the conversation. I suggested that the selection of the *Epitre* was probably due to the fact that I had been announced as a *collégien;* the sugar refiner had thought that I was a scholar at the Collège Royal; the students there were many of them far advanced in Voltaire's philosophy. We had not, however, told a lie, as I was surely a *collégien*. So that no reproach could be addressed to my friend on that score. I said that I was glad the thing had taken this

turn to open his eyes, and show him where the gentleman intended to land him at the end of his excursions in literature. I knew my friend too well not to be sure that such an open attack on Christianity could not but be extremely distasteful to him. If the sugar refiner, I said, had succeeded in making an infidel of him, how would his poor mother and two sisters have felt? At the end of my talk poor Baudouin replied that he was horror-stricken by the blasphemies he had just heard. But what could he do in his position? Monsieur Dufou, his employer, often sent him to Richebourg, what could he say to the gentleman? etc.

Poor Baudouin was very soft and extremely timid. I succeeded, however, in making him understand that he could carry the messages of his house to the refinery without engaging in conversation. In a couple of weeks, he might, without any fuss, return the books, and state in a note that " he had now so much to do that he could not read as formerly. He was very thankful for past favors, but they would be henceforth useless in his position," etc. The only thing that he might fear was that his character might be impugned by that fellow. If this happened the most simple thing to do was to acquaint the head of the firm, M. Dufou himself, with the real cause of the displeasure of the gentleman. It was known to everyone in Nantes that the Dufous were Christian gentlemen; and they all would have felt indignant that the faith of one of their clerks had been thus tampered with in the office of their sugar refiner. They might for that reason withdraw their custom.

This quieted poor Baudouin, who acted on my suggestion, and there was no need of carrying the affair to the tribunal of his employers. But this incident

shows the danger to which the Christian Faith was exposed in France at the time. No doubt the half educated were at that time in great danger of being misled into Voltairianism.

The gradual decline of religion among workingmen and clerks in cities and towns soon became visible to every eye. The Church, always active in her endeavor to prevent evil and promote good, began, as soon as free from the trammels imposed on her by Napoleon, to open what is called "missions" on a large scale. I do not remember who were the first missionaries, but I think they were the famous *Missionaires de France*, under the leadership of the Abbé de Rauzan. I recollect well a great mission given in Nantes, in 1816, less than a year after Waterloo. It produced a deep impression among the men generally, chiefly in the lower ranks of society. Even the papers were at that time prudently tolerant. M. Mellinet-Malassis, *Imprimeur Libraire*, editor and proprietor at Nantes of the *Journal de la Loire Inférieure*, substituted in the front of his splendid store (a few steps from our house) for the imperial eagle which had been seen there during the *cent jours*, a carved representation of a gilded Bible, and the announcement that he was again *Imprimeur de Sa Sainteté et de Mgr. l'Eveque de Nantes*, although there was no bishop in Nantes at that time. I have long regretted that I did not make a note of the time when this Bible disappeared again, and was replaced by a representation of a printing press. It must have been towards 1820 when M. Mellinet-Malassis became a great liberal in his paper and in his associations, though I must say that he never went so far as radicalism.

Meanwhile the "mission" of 1816 was eminently successful. Many men who had formerly neglected the practice of their religion, probably some of them since 1789, returned to their duty; and at the end of the exercises an immense Cross with a strikingly beautiful figure of the Saviour nailed to it, was planted, as the French say, along an exterior wall of the cathedral, in St. Peter's Square. It was consequently a public manifestation of religion which the police would not have allowed five years later. For a long time afterwards I saw crowds of people, among them many men, kneeling and praying in front of it, that is, entirely in public, and in the midst of busy people intent only on their pleasure or worldly concerns. That Cross must be there still; for, strange to say, it was not cut down in 1830, as happen d in so many other places. But the permission to plant another anywhere else in the city was persistently refused, even in 1827 under the devout Charles X, when another "mission" took place directed by Father de Rauzan and his missionaries. I walked in the procession on that occasion, as I was studying theology at the time in the Grand Séminaire. It was certainly one of the finest sights I witnessed in my life, and it could be almost compared to some processions I saw in Rome under Gregory XVI, but I did not hear that many men were brought back to God and induced to go to church, which at that time most of them had openly deserted.

A second cause which led to the decline of religion in France was the bitter partisanship which then sprang up, and has continued to this day. It unfortunately was not confined to political questions, but extended to religion. Only in France is a Liberal in politics

almost invariably an enemy to religion; whilst loyalty to religion is supposed to require a man to be a Royalist, or at least a Conservative. In consequence of this, many men of the lower classes, having from 1816 down to our day espoused the liberal or republican cause, have become for this reason ardent anti-Catholics; in fact, usually fanatical, bitter anti-Catholics.

In 1815, after Waterloo, the immense majority of the Chamber of Deputies were strongly royalist and soon expressed violent opposition to several articles of the charter granted by Louis XVIII. At least, they were accused of this by the opposite party; and although they denied it, now that people are better able to judge, it is very difficult to believe that if it had been possible for them to do away entirely with that modern charter of privileges, they would have not done it with great pleasure. On this account, perhaps, this legislature was called by Royalists in general, *la Chambre Introuvable.* The epithet is not French, but it expresses admirably the impossibility of ever finding another like it. The King, however, dissolved it, being himself a Liberal, and in the chamber which was next elected the Royalist majority was considerably reduced. But at the same time that this *Chambre Introuvable* had been accused of absolutist propensities, it had shown also a strong religious bias, and tried its best to preserve to Catholicism all its influence over the people. It was unfortunate that this happened at that time, because the Liberal party, now in process of formation, and always ardent in its defence of the charter, came naturally to connect in their mind two objects so independent of each other as are religion and absolutism. From that day forth nearly every Liberal in France was set

in opposition to religious influence of any kind; and because the other party felt it was honorable to defend a thing so worthy of respect as religion always is, the division of parties took the shape which was noticed a moment ago. A Liberal who practised his religion, or at any time went to church, became an anomaly in France; I remember how strange it looked to many that such men as Lacordaire, Montalembert, and their friends, should, in 1830, fight so valiantly for Catholicism, when everybody knew they professed Liberalism in politics.

This was also probably the cause of another fact which makes the case extremely serious, namely, the condemnation of Liberalism by the Church. The Liberal party in France, being composed in great part of men devoid of faith, soon adopted principles with regard to the connection of Church and State which were absolutely at variance with Christian views. The supremacy of the State in disputed social questions, the exclusion of religion from the education of youth, the absolute freedom granted to all politicians of speaking and writing against Catholic belief and morality, etc., cannot possibly be countenanced by the spiritual guides of the people. But those principles, with many others, were openly advocated by the Liberalism of that day. Montalembert and his friends understood Liberal doctrines differently; still they felt occasionally disposed to grant too much to the new advocates of freedom; and their views could not be adopted by men of a stricter mind, who saw the ultimate consequences of views, which were mainly designed for the object of bringing about the total exclusion of the Church from society, and of reducing her influence to naught.

All these circumstances combined have gradually, from 1816 down to our own day, produced in France the present political conditions. Liberals and Republicans advocate principles which cannot but be fatal to religion, and the supporters of Christian opinions seem to support anti-Liberal doctrines just at the moment when the nation is more than ever inclined to repudiate them. Worse still, with universal suffrage, as it was introduced in France by the celebrated *plébiscites* of the Second Empire, the lower classes of society have become politically of extreme importance; and most of them having naturally embraced Liberal views are at this moment fiercely opposed to religion. The short reign of the Paris Commune in 1871 had shown to what excess they can carry their animosity against the Church.

The beginning of this ominous state of affairs dates from 1816, when the Charter granted by Louis XVIII two years previously, became the standard of Liberalism and France's destiny entered into a new period of political and religious agitation. From 1792 down to 1800 the main question discussed in the midst of an ocean of blood was between Monarchy and Republicanism, religion being merely the victim immolated by the prevailing faction. From 1800 to 1815 despotism ruled; while all parties were silent, religion was allowed to enjoy an inglorious peace whilst the head of the Church was being persecuted. From this last date to the present time, Liberalism has absorbed the attention of France, and although to-day they speak only of Republicanism, and the previous Liberal charters have altogether disappeared, still the great question is the same, and the battleground on which they now fight is after

all Catholicism under the name of Ultramontanism. On this account the Bourbon restoration became a most critical period for religion in France. These general considerations have no reference to the insignificant events of my life. But I witnessed the play of these organic changes and must state plainly what I saw.

CHAPTER III

A GLANCE AT LA VENDÉE AND THE OCEAN

My father, who had been an ardent Bonapartist until 1810, had cooled down considerably since Napoleon began his policy of violence against Pius VII and Spain. When the Bourbons returned in 1814, he not only rejoiced with the immense majority of the nation, but he advocated their cause with so much ardor that he became obnoxious to all those of his neighbors who remained attached to the Corsican. This became rather unpleasant for him on the return of Napoleon from Elba, and obliged him to send his wife and children out of the city.

I remember as vividly as if it were yesterday, the 20th of March, 1815, when the signal telegraph (invented by l'abbé Chappe, which the government used from the beginning of the century) announced that Napoleon had entered the Tuileries. It was a day of gloom, in general, for the Nantese population; very few persons could be seen in the streets; everyone kept to his home, or went only to see his most intimate friends to talk over the situation. I saw members of my family shed tears on the occasion. Several friends came during the afternoon, and all feared for France. I remember particularly a little tobacconist of the name of Saget, who in the most gloomy colors described the invasion that

would soon take place along the Rhine, where large numbers of the forme · allied armies were still encamped. The sprightly M. Baudry paid us a short visit, and seemed to be in a very gloomy mood. He appeared to think, however, that when the Bourbons would return (for very few indeed imagined they would not return) Louis XVIII would be more severe in his exercise of authority than he had been the first time; and, perhaps, who knows, he might think of repairing many former acts of injustice, and see that noble families like his own would not be reduced to penury, but would have restored to them at least some of their property. Poor little Baudry!

The only stir that I remarked that day was at the store of M. Mellinet-Malassis near our house. Men with ladders took down the *Bible d'or,* with which it had been adorned during the first restoration, to replace it by a big gilt eagle with outspread wings and sharp talons. M. Mellinet was always consulting the times, and shaping his policy according to the ways of the hour.

Two or three weeks after this the streets began to be alive with *fédérés.* Everybody who has read the history of France during that period will remember that Napoleon, knowing that he would soon have the whole of Europe arrayed against him, thought that the best way of exciting the French people was to hold out hopes to the still existing remnants of Jacobinism. He had always more or less encouraged some at least of their aspirations, by giving high positions about his person to several of their former leaders. It has been seen how he kept the party alive with the view of pitting it against royalism during the whole of his reign. He

imagined that he would still find in France in 1815 something of that Jacobin fury which was supposed to have driven away the Prussian and Austrian armies from French soil in 1792. It is certain that in 1815 there was a real attempt made at rekindling that frenzy which had made of France a kind of pandemonium, and Napoleon encouraged it. Everyone expected to see the old hatred revive among the various classes of citizens, and the predominant party, if Jacobinism was allowed its sway, renew some at least of its former enormities.

In Paris the Tuileries, where the Emperor had again established his court, was daily surrounded by large numbers of *sans culottes*, as they were formerly called, asking for arms, ready to organize their old National Guard and volunteer regiments; and from their out-cries and hurrahs it was manifest that they had not forgotten their republican enthusiasm and their deep hatred of royalty. Frenchmen who had recently shown so ardent an affection for the Bourbons seemed to be marked out for future proscriptions.

Napoleon announced that he would appoint a day of federation when all those elements of "patriotism" would be at once reorganized, so as to be able to sweep over the country, and march on afterwards to the frontier against the combined forces of all Europe. I think that in Paris the day of federation took place in May, and was called on that account *le champs de Mai*. Similar demonstrations took place throughout France, and soon after the occupation of the Tuileries by Napoleon, bands of *fédérés* began to be organized in Nantes, as well as in Paris, and all other large cities. I remember well to have seen some of them pass in our

street, dressed in their common soiled clothes, with drums and fifes, and having no other signs of being soldiers than the old rusty muskets in their hands. No one could foresee that the whole of this commotion would soon be over, and that the following June would put an end to this martial ardor. But all good citizens trembled, as they remembered the excesses of the first revolution, and they feared the revival of the same frenzy. My father was so fully persuaded that troublous days were coming that, as he was not able to leave the city himself, he made up his mind at least to protect his family against harm. He therefore sent his wife and children to the seashore, where my mother's relatives resided, and he remained alone in Nantes with an old housekeeper. The place we went to was so retired that, as no papers ever reached the village, the peaceful inhabitants were all along profoundly ignorant of what was happening on the Belgian frontier, and I do not remember having heard even the name of Waterloo before I returned to Nantes.

The place I was sent to was a small village called La Bernerie, situated just a couple of miles north of Bourgneuf in the western part of La Vendée. Under the old régime *le pays de Retz* was a district of a pretty good size, extending along the seashore from the mouth of the river Loire to the neighborhood of Sables d'Olonne, and in the interior of the country, from the seashore to the neighborhood of the Lac de Grandlieu. The whole surface of this district is perfectly flat, and because there were in it all along the ocean a great number of *marais salans*, that is, artificial shallow ponds where sea water was admitted for the manufacture of salt, the country itself, in general, was called Le Marais. During

the Revolution, this was included in the large territory which took up arms for the King against the Convention, and was considered a part of La Vendée, though this name belonged properly to a much smaller district along the river Loire, Niortaise; and east of Lake Grandlieu as far nearly as Poitiers, the country was called Le Bocage, on account of the numerous trees, shrubs, and hedges, which formed the enclosures of an immense number of small fields and pastures. I was going, therefore, to live in a country which Charette, a few years before, had rendered famous by many of his campaigns, since his operations were always restricted to Le Marais and the western edge of Le Bocage. During winter, however, when both royalist and republican armies suspended their operations, he held his court, for he had a court almost like a king, in a small town called Légé, lying in the midst of the Bocage.

La Bernerie is a small village on the seashore whose inhabitants were then chiefly engaged in fishing. The beach was flat, and the water so shallow along the shore, that at ebb tide you could walk nearly a mile in the sea. At that distance there was a small range of rocks covered with excellent oysters which it was easy to detach with a hammer, and when a young man I have often taken my breakfast on the spot. From thence you see the island of Noirmoutier at a short distance, but it is only from Bourgneuf, or rather, from further south, that it is possible to ford the strait a few times in the year at the period of low tides.

I do not know for what reason I was sent ahead of the family; my mother and brothers came after me. I was confided to a party of good country people of La

Bernerie, who were returning from Nantes, after having sold the fish they had brought to market, and they were consequently leading back home a number of asses with empty baskets on their backs. Sometimes a man seated on one of them held me on his lap, sometimes, to tell the truth, I was simply placed in one of the baskets, while the provisions they were carrying home were used as ballast to keep me from falling. We followed the road south of the Loire, and also south of the Lac de Grandlieu. Consequently we crossed the whole country, where Charette, little more than twenty years before, had fought against the armies of the Convention.

After a few days' traveling, stopping at night in some inn or farmhouse, and taking our meals in the open air during the day, we finally arrived on the crest of the *falaises*, or sandhills, which border the sea, and from their summit I had the first view of the ocean. I remember how deeply I was struck by that immensity, and by the white foam of the gentle waves, which rising gradually above the universal level of the water, fell down softly with a murmuring and harmonious sound, as if all the shells swept by the sea had been created only to give us a musical concert.

The day was beautiful, and the air calm. It was ebb tide and the limit of the ocean had withdrawn to nearly a mile from the shore. On that level surface of wet sand, left bare by the receding sea, the eye could see only a single fishing smack fallen on its side, with its tiny mast held in the air almost horizontally. This total want of activity was then common on all the coasts of France, and had been the result of the contest between that country and England. Few Frenchmen had

travelled on the sea during the last twenty years. We were then in view of La Bernerie, and I was soon placed in the hands of an old aunt of mine, where I awaited the arrival of my mother.

At the very time I was carried on ass-back across that celebrated country, an effort was being made, unknown almost to everybody, to oppose the new attempt of Napoleon, and to keep a good part of La Vendée under the sway of the Bourbons. D'Autichamp and Suzannet found still some ardor left in the Bocage, and could keep the country against Napoleon's abettors until the return of Louis XVIII. But they did not see the possibility of doing it in Le Marais and along the ocean; and they tried to oppose the rash attempt of Augustus and Louis La Rochejaquelein, who finally ventured to raise the white flag in the open country out of the Bocage, and were crushed at once by very superior forces. This disagreement, however, is denied in Michaud's *Biographie Universelle.*

In fact, the peasants around Bourgneuf were tired of fighting without any apparent object. They were not afraid at this time of having their religion interfered with, even in case Napoleon succeeded. There was a moment in 1815, when both the La Rochejaqueleins came very near the village where I had just arrived a few weeks before. No one stirred, although all the people knew it. They talked a great deal of it, I remember, but no young man appeared willing to leave his fishing smack, and shoulder a musket, at least, in my immediate neighborhood. Many of them, however, were not sorry for having done so under Charette. On the contrary, they all knew that Napoleon himself had called that first war a "war of giants"; but they

did not feel the necessity of becoming giants again, as there was scarcely a monster to destroy.

Nevertheless, there was not a spot in the district called Le Marais which had not been made notable by some feat of daring during the late struggle. Around La Bernerie, particularly, every village or little town had its legend, which would be kept in the memory of the inhabitants for a long time to come. Pornie, a few miles to the north, a nice little harbor on the seashore, had been besieged and captured twice, at least, by Charette. Challans, a few miles to the south, an inland town of some repute for its size and industry, had often been the centre of military operations of great importance. Ile Dieu, an island in the ocean, nearly adjoining to Noirmoutier, had several times received English troops, and the Comte d'Artois had spent six weeks there with the head of the Vendean troops. Charette had kept possession of Noirmoutier for a considerable time. It would take too long to go through all the remarkable events that had taken place a few years before, around the little spot whither I had been sent. What I learned there was supplemented by newer details, which I received from the Abbé Michon, my teacher at Nantes, and which were much more graphic than those I had received from my Bernerie friends.

M. Michon was born at St. Philibert, a large town on the southern shore of the Lac de Grandlieu, about 1787, and was about seven years of age when the struggle began in La Vendée, and eleven or twelve at its close. At St. Jacques, living with M. Michon, there was a M. Armand Bechard, a cousin of the priest, born in the same place, perhaps two years younger, who had witnessed the same struggles and trials as his cousin.

Both were men of intelligence and character who had had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the war in La Vendée. Charette's campaigns from 1793 until 1796 started from Machecoul, and extended in a circle, embracing many other little towns or large villages, such as Montaigne, Légé, Challans, Veille Vigne, Aigrefeuille, Tiffauges, etc. But most of those places lie in a circumference whose centre is St. Philibert de Grandlieu, distant from the nearest of them only five French leagues, and from the farthest, not more than ten. St. Philibert, besides, was a most important position for Charette, who could, by occupying it, reach with his troops, in a few hours, the best strategic points of his military operations. Charette was undoubtedly the greatest Vendean General; and because he never left this part of the country, and never engaged in any expedition beyond the Loire, as all the other royalist chieftains did, the operations in which he was concerned give the best idea of the true Vendean war.

The first outbreak in Le Marais took place in Machecoul, which is not five leagues distant from St. Philibert, and it is there that Charette was obliged by the peasants to place himself at their head. This insignificant little town was taken, lost and retaken several times during the war. These facts give great weight to the testimony of M. Michon and his cousin.

The first thing that I gathered from their statements was the universality of the insurrection. The whole population rose at once and there was scarcely any dissenting voice. Many say that there was already a good number of patriots in all the chief towns, who helped the troops sent by the Convention. This is to a great extent an error. There were, no doubt, a

few people imbued with revolutionary ideas, who wrote to the Convention to have troops sent, who tried to organize a revolutionary government in their townships, on the model of the one at Paris, and who after the success of the Republic, proudly held their heads above the common herd, became rich, and made very bad use of their wealth.

But the number of these patriots was small in La Vendée. As long as it was supposed by the Convention that there were, in those distant parts of the Republic, a large number of patriots who called for aid, and promised that with it they would easily subdue the insurrection, regiment after regiment was dispatched, but melted there like snow, and a number of small armies disappeared with arms and baggage. It was only when experienced generals were entrusted with the direction of the military operations, and were placed at the head of very large armies, that the country was subdued. Shortly after the beginning of the movement, in March, '93, the whole population of both Bocage and Marais was on foot, occupying in force the chief towns and villages of the whole country, dislodging from their barracks and *corps de garde* the small garrisons of republican soldiers which had been sent in haste from the surrounding districts, replacing the tricolor by the white flag, restoring the churches to the faithful priests, and in general undoing all the former disorganizing work of the Revolution.

This was the cause of the horrible massacre and burnings which were set on foot by the revolutionary government, as soon as it became evident that large armies were necessary to put down the insurrection. The decree of the Convention, quoted by M. Thiers, is

sufficient to prove how far the Vendeans, *en masse*, had carried their heroism, and succeeded in their effort to free themselves from the republican yoke. "In this decree," says the author of the *History of the French Revolution*, "the minister of war was ordered to send into the disturbed departments combustible materials for setting fire to the woods, the copses and the bushes. 'The forests,' it was there said, 'shall be cut down, the haunts of the rebels shall be destroyed, the crops shall be cut by companies of laborers, the cattle seized, and the whole carried out of the country.'"

A short time after this barbarous order was issued, a republican officer gave in his Memoirs (as quoted by Frederick Schoberl, editor of the English .translation of Thiers' History) the following frightful description: "I did not see a single male being at the towns of St. Hermand, Chantonnay or Herbiers. A few women only had escaped the sword. Country seats, cottages, habitations of whichever kind, were burnt. The herds and flocks were wandering in terror around their usual places of shelter, now smoking in ruins. Night came on, but the dismal and undulating blaze of the conflagration afforded light all over the country. To the bleating of the disturbed flocks of sheep, and bellowing of the terrified cattle, were joined the deep hoarse notes of carrion crows, and the cries of wild animals coming from the woods to prey on the carcasses of the slain. At length, a distant column of fire, widening and increasing as I approached, served me as a beacon. It was the town of Mortagne in flames. When I arrived thither, no living creatures were to be seen, save a few wretched women who were striving to save some remnants of their property from the general conflagration."

So many other descriptions of similar scenes have been published by writers of history or travel, on this horrible subject, that the reader may think it useless to introduce the Rev. S. M. Michon and M. Armand as new witnesses. But we cannot have too much testimony provided it be authentic and certain. MM. Michon and Armand both belonged to families of well-to-do farmers, but they could not carry away their farms nor their cattle, so that from the first day in their flight from home they were altogether dependent on chance for a living. They had fled in advance of the coming troops and did not witness the burning of their cottages and the complete destruction of their property; but as they had occasion to return home several times during the course of their roving life, they saw that their loss included all they had.

If they had not seen the Mayençais under General Kleber, at first (having run away a day or two before their coming), they did not escape them altogether; and it was owing to this that poor Armand, a boy of four or five, lost his parents. As far as I remember, the two boys seldom saw each other during their wanderings. The last day little Armand spent with his father and mother he described with horror. He was in the midst of a large number of Vendeans, who were, at the time, flying before the "blues," that is, the republican soldiers. A part of the fleeing multitude arrived at a large grave-yard surrounded by high walls, and like a flock of sheep they went into it, thinking, I suppose, that they would be more safe there on account of the sacredness of the place, or perhaps, on account of the stone enclosure. The troops of Mayençais following them did not take the trouble of getting into the

grave-yard and using their sabres. They surrounded the whole place and began to fire into the crowd volleys of musketry which did not take long to destroy all of them. The father of Armand was shot before his eyes; and he then clung tenaciously to the apron of his mother, who was likewise shot. In falling she covered him and he had the good sense to remain quiet under her, and thus ultimately escaped.

Imagine a child four or five years old left alone in the world in such circumstances as these. For he had to ramble and live as well as he could until the end of this disastrous war. Many others, children, women and old men, were in the same plight. An immense number of them perished; a few survived as Armand did. But it is surprising that he did not become a roaming savage. At the end of the conflict, he met with an uncle of his who received him into his family and became a second father to him. But for some time the child could not sleep in the room that had been assigned him. Having been so long accustomed to live in the open air in all kinds of weather, he could not bear to spend the night in a bed and under a roof; but every night when his uncle's family were sound asleep, he slipped away unperceived, and went to take his rest in the garden or in a field. At the time I knew him, however, he had lost his nomad habits, and was of a remarkably gay and lively disposition; so that nothing of the savage or of the wild man of the woods could be perceived in him.

Of the numberless adventures he met with during those trying times which he often related, some ludicrous, some sad, some indifferent, I remember but few. Probably on account of the horrible details connected with

the grave-yard scene, which overshadowed all the others. I remember the following circumstances, however. After having wandered several days, with scarcely anything to eat, he had the good luck to come upon the ruins of an old stone wall. As winter was approaching he found all the holes of the wall full of snails, extremely prolific in France, which had betaken themselves there to hibernate. Oh, what a meal he made, and how he thanked God, who had unexpectedly sent him food!

The trials experienced by the other little boy, young Michon, were somewhat different from the rude and wild life of Armand. He remained all the time with his father, mother, brothers or sisters. A great part of the time, however, he was a wanderer like his cousin, and he witnessed many heartrending scenes. He spoke oftener of Westerman than of the Mayençais, who were the greatest subject of talk for M. Armand. It is known that this republican general was brave and skilful, but excessively hard-hearted and rude, not to say barbarous. He had formed a legion of five or six thousand rough soldiers, at the head of whom he scoured the country and destroyed everything that came in his way. He was certainly one of those who inaugurated the horrible system of massacres and burnings, and if he was not as great a monster as Rossignol and Rousin, who likewise flourished in La Vendée at the same time, the poor inhabitants of the country could not praise him much and spoke of him in fitting terms. M. Michon would have written a history of his exploits somewhat different from that of M. Thiers. I must say that as I received my first notions of Westerman's biography from the lips of my revered teacher, I could not but open my eyes when, much later, I happened

to fall on the celebrated *History of the French Revolution.*

M. Michon was not inclined to make a hero of Westerman. He saw him burn and ravage the country with four or five thousand devils at his back. The way he spoke of him makes me suppose that he must have seen with his own eyes the bodies of those whom Westerman had literally hewn in pieces. For he used to ride at the head of his troops, with the sleeves of his coat tucked up to his elbow. He held the reins within his teeth, and grasping his sabre with both hands, he would strike right and left at the crowd fleeing before him. In this crowd there were often as many women as men, and no doubt, small children too.

M. Michon was not always wandering through the country with his relatives. There was a time when the splendid victories of the Vendean chief at last brought order and repose to the inhabitants, and the family of our friend could visit again their former village, and try to live on the produce of their farm. But what scenes did they behold along the shores of the once beautiful Lake of Grandlieu! Still there was hope, and the survivors of the previous struggle had too much to do to repair the damage, to think of feeling only their present hardships. But alas! this lull was not to last long. After a very short time misfortune came again, and the last act of the drama was far worse than the first. There came a time when the Vendean army amounted to more than a hundred thousand warriors; that of the republicans was still more numerous. It can be easily imagined what was the state of the country wherever the troops of the Convention obtained an advantage. Towards the end of September, 1793,

that body, sitting in Paris, sent a proclamation to the "army of the west" couched in these few significant words:

"Soldiers of liberty, the brigands of La Vendée must be exterminated before the end of October. The welfare of the country requires this; the impatience of the French people commands it; their courage ought to accomplish it. The national gratitude awaits all those whose valor and patriotism shall have irrevocably established liberty and the republic!"

The scenes which were then enacted in the doomed country cannot be described by human pen. It was particularly of that period that Napoleon spoke when he called the Vendean War a "war of giants." Seldom in human history has a people displayed the heroism with which the Vendeans fought. But the full description of it would be foreign to my scope.

To return once more to the days when I was of the village of Bernerie, where I heard some few details of the war in La Vendée, nothing of the former enthusiasm appeared to exist in that country. The two La Rochejaqueleins, who were still alive, tried to bring together and organize some Vendean troops in the Marais, during the "Hundred Days." They were a part of the time very near the little village where I had just arrived, and attempts were made to induce many of the peasants and fisherman to join their ranks. Not a single one enlisted, and the two ardent young royalists, who had acted altogether against the advice of their friends, perished. Some of the causes explaining the lukewarmness of the population at that time have been mentioned, but it can be said in general, that after the gigantic effort that had been made by the whole country,

a few years before, it could not be expected that the same enthusiasm should revive. The first had ended in total disaster, and the high motives which had supported the Vendeans during that awful struggle did not exist any more in 1815. The people of the Marais even more than those of the Bocage could not but be averse to start afresh on a fruitless career of danger, or rather of sure defeat, on account of the defenceless country in which they lived. But even in the Bocage there was not the spirit of former days. The country had been totally ravaged; the people had scarcely had time to recover; they were not afraid of the fearful oppression which had been the cause of their rising in arms against the Convention. That Convention of 1793 was, in their eyes, a blood-stained tribunal before which their legitimate king had appeared as a victim, whose unjust immolation they were bound to avenge. Circumstances were wholly changed during the "Hundred Days."

CHAPTER IV

FIRST EFFORTS OF THE FRENCH CLERGY TO RE-ESTABLISH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

As long as Napoleon ruled over France there was scarcely any possibility of opening houses of education under the influence of the Church. The Emperor's policy when he founded his *Université de France* has been outlined, and the restraints imposed upon the bishops even in their Petits Séminaires have been set forth. At most the bishops could attempt to establish primary schools, and Napoleon would scarcely have allowed these to be entrusted to religious, whether men or women. Hence the Brothers of the Christian Schools could resume their efforts for the religious education of the people's children on a large scale, only under the Bourbons. I still remember the effect they produced in Nantes in 1816, when they reappeared in the streets in their strange dress, leading long processions of boys and bringing them to church to hear Mass. It seems, however, that some few of the Brothers' schools had before been opened at Lyons; none at Nantes.

Even if the clergy had been allowed during the First Empire to resume their work both in primary and secondary education, it would scarcely have been possible for them to do it. They were very few in number; the parishes were very large, and all they could do for the children was to teach them their catechism, which

they did themselves three times a week during the whole year, and always in church. This, at least, was the case for Nantes, a city at that time of ninety thousand inhabitants and more, where five churches only had been reopened by Napoleon. It was in this way that I myself was instructed and prepared for my First Communion by the good priest of St. Jacques' parish. Neither at M. Houdebine's nor at good Madame Pouliguen's, nor at three other primary schools to which I was successively sent, after my return from La Bernerie, was I ever taught one line of catechism.

After the Restoration, the system of secondary instruction, what is called the classical course, remained nearly the same as it had been under the Emperor, except that the students in the Petits Séminaires were not obliged any more to go to the Lycées for class recitations, and the Government did not watch the number of boys that were received in those schools who had no intention of studying for the Church. This, at least, was the case for Nantes, and the reader remembers what was said of the great number of noblemen's sons who were educated under clerical influence in that city during my college life.

As soon, however, as the French priests understood that the King's government intended to favor religion, that is, to give them a little more liberty than they had had, they manifested great zeal with regard to Christian education. Brothers and Sisters began to teach school everywhere, and many individual *curés* undertook to receive in their houses as many boys as they could admit, to prepare them for the Petits Séminaires. Several second-rate colleges even were opened by *curés,* in which boys in great numbers studied the classics

until the fourth form—*la quatrième*—to go afterwards and enter the episcopal schools. Thus near Nantes there were Le Collège de Maisdon, Le Collège de Combraie, Le Collège de Vay, etc. All these localities were only villages and the colleges were very simple buildings, erected at the expense of the *curés*.

Besides, there were many *curés* who received boys into their houses for instruction, from two to twelve at a time. It was at one of those private schools that I spent what I may call two of the happiest years of my life. I mean the school of M. Michon, *curé* of St. Jacques', near Nantes. To show how far those good priests carried their zeal I shall give some minute details about M. Michon's school. It will then be clear that M. Michon did not work in order to enrich himself. The parish of St. Jacques had for its *curé* the Rev. M. Guibert, an old man who had taken the schismatical oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The work of the parish fell on the shoulders of M. Michon. He not only said his Mass every day, but he heard many confessions, particularly in Lent and Advent. Three times in the week, except in August and the beginning of September, he taught catechism in the church to at least six hundred children, both boys and girls. There were no Sunday-school teachers, as we call them here.

He was careful to become acquainted with every child, even the most dull and uninteresting, and he took good care to give to each of them a solid knowledge of their religion, so far as they were capable of it. He alone visited the sick in the parish, and administered the sacraments to the dying. No one among the parishioners would have thought of calling in *Monsieur le curé*. He attended to all the material details con-

nected with the service of God; cleaning the church, keeping it in order, adorning the three altars, seeing to the choir, which he led himself, even from the altar when he officiated. He had a splendid voice and knew plain chant as well as other music. This and much other work was certainly sufficient for one man. Yet M. Michon undertook to open a school for boys and he founded a kind of religious community for women for teaching the girls.

After my return from the seashore, I was sent successively to three primary schools in Nantes, directed by lay teachers somewhat different from the excellent M. Houdebine, and from the tender-hearted Madame Pouliguen. I had entered on my tenth year when my parents thought of making me begin my classical studies. I had always expressed the wish of becoming a priest, and for this reason my parents placed me in charge of a priest. God be praised for this! There was something so attractive in M. Michon's house that I would not have enjoyed the same advantages nor felt the same freedom in any other place.

The arrangements made between him and my parents were very simple. A little bedstead was to be sent from home, and placed in one of the small rooms up-stairs. My linen would be washed at the expense of my parents, who besides were to pay just three hundred francs yearly for my board. As the table of *M. le vicaire* was excellent, it is manifest that M. Michon did not make large profits on what he received from my family. At M. Michon's I found five other little boys of my age, but I was the only one who intended to become a priest. There were in the same house four young men, ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-five, who were

preparing for the priesthood and who taught the little boys in return for free instruction. Thus the eighteen hundred francs paid by six of us were to defray the expenses of ten boys. The young clergyman had no object in view except to prepare four or five young men for the Church.

It was, I think, on the 13th of February, 1818, that I became an inmate of M. Michon's house. Neither my father nor my mother could come with me; but as the good M. Michon had dined with our family after the conclusion of all the arrangements, he had already become acquainted with me. The journey, however, along those interminable bridges, which I had never crossed before, required a guide, and an excellent man named Courtois, a layman, one of the best singers at the cathedral, who was very glad to have an occasion to pay a visit to the good *vicaire*, whom he knew well, took me in charge; and in the course of the afternoon we went together so as to arrive at dinner time.

M. Michon's house was at the extreme end of the suburb of St. Jacques, and beyond it stretched fields and meadows and orchards. The church was about five minutes' walk away in a thickly peopled part of the parish. The house was a pleasant bourgeois country residence built at a good distance from the street, or rather the road, for the street dwindled away to nothing before the house was reached. The building was placed just between two gardens, nicely kept and full of fruit trees, vegetables and flowering shrubs. From the road one entered, not the fruit garden, but a large yard running contiguous and parallel to it, to the left of which were several outbuildings used for the school. The six Latin scholars were not the only pupils taught here;

there was besides a large day school for boys from eight to fifteen years old. The girls were taught at the convent at some distance from us on the same road.

We boarders remained with the day scholars only during study time, when we were together at our desks in a large apartment, which had formerly been a coach house. But we had our classes apart from the day scholars, took recreation in the front garden, whilst the externes took it during recess in the above-mentioned yard.

When M. Courtois brought me in, the good *vicaire* was reading his breviary in his private garden back of the house, where pupils were seldom admitted. The servant girl who went to apprise him of our coming took us not to the parlor, but to the garden. The day being unusually fine for February, we were told to sit down on a bench, and had to wait nearly ten minutes, during which the good man was kneeling under a large fig tree, probably reciting his vespers.

As soon as he had finished, he seated himself and took me between his knees, and began a rambling conversation on every possible subject, speaking, of course, nearly all the time with M. Courtois, whom he had not seen for a long time.

The talk was very animated when we heard the little bell calling us to dinner. The dining-room, which was used as a parlor outside of meal time, was large enough to seat with ease twelve persons around a long table rounded at the corners. On entering it we found M. Armand, the *vicaire's* cousin, aged about twenty-eight; young Pergeline, about eighteen; Trethant, fifteen; and Couperie, fourteen. They all became priests in course of time except poor M. Armand. Besides these ecclesias-

tical students there were five little boys: Pineau, the son of a dealer in prepared skins and hides, one of the many along the interminable bridges. The boy had been sent to that school only for his First Communion, and I learned afterwards that his father, who was still alive, had been the inventor of the celebrated *bateaux à soupape* used by Carrier for his *noyades*. This at least was the common report. Boyer, scarcely ten years old, a very dull and uninteresting boy from Auvergne, had been placed in that school by his uncle, who had fought in his youth against the Vendeans. He came sometimes to speak to M. Michon about those campaigns and would acknowledge that the Vendeans were, after all, brave fellows. Chatelain, the last, was about nine, and there was nothing remarkable about him.

None of them was intended for the Church, and except Pineau, I did not hear what became of them afterwards. The latter was sent with me to the Petit Séminaire when M. Michon closed his house. His father, in course of time, sent him to England to study machinery and he came back, I heard, very proficient in modern inventions, and was one of those who helped, under the Bourbons, to introduce machinery in French manufactories, which had scarcely been attempted before. Thus the *bateaux à soupape* became the origin of mechanical inventions in France. Soon after I arrived, a little boy came to live with us of the name of Verhoeven, the son of a Flemish gentleman, an excellent Catholic. In course of time, little Verhoeven studied for the Church and became a most devout clergyman in Nantes.

As the reader perceives, our school was remarkable for the variety of its inmates, and in this it reflected the

state of France at that time. When I reached the dining-room with M. Courtois, a place was made for me at a corner of the table, near M. Michon; and I soon found that I had an excellent appetite for the savory things that were prepared for us. All this had been provided by an oldish woman who was the only servant in the house, and whose name I never learned, because we called her only the *Coqua*. Evidently we were all determined to learn Latin.

The Coqua was more than fifty years old, had very red hair, and a truly repulsive countenance strongly pock-marked. But she had a golden heart, and was at the same time the only disciplinarian in the house for us little boys. Besides the general supervision over us, she had to sweep the house and keep it clean, make the beds—except those of the young men, who attended to this themselves—answer the door bell, and procure three meals a day for a dozen persons at least. I have never seen any woman, young or old, help her, except on great occasions, when M. Michon had invited other clergymen, or laymen of rank, to dine with him.

It must not be imagined that the dinners she prepared were coarse affairs consisting of a *plat de builli*, and another of *roti*, with some cabbage or greens. No, in her large kitchen, beside the roomy fireplace, around which there were always several *rotissoirs* for big pieces, together with the *pot au feu*, there was likewise in a corner of the room a range built in brick, on the top of which could be seen at least twenty little holes, each with its lower grate, stuffed many of them with red-hot charcoal, over which were simmering the vegetables or other delicacies that were to be brought on the table piping hot, at the proper moment. And being always

alone the Coqua had to serve as well as cook; and she was also the only purveyor. How this good woman could go through so much labor I have never been able to explain to myself, and I will not attempt to explain it to others. French women can beat all others; this is my experience.

We shall have occasion, further on, to speak of Mother Coqua and her golden heart. We got up exactly at half-past five and each of us said his morning prayers at the foot of his bed. After washing and dressing we went directly to church, to hear and serve the Mass of the good *vicaire,* who was always ready to begin at six.

Mass over, we ran to the house, which always was a very attractive place for us; and on arriving we found the cook very busy preparing the table for breakfast. Too often we were heartless enough to tease her, but she invariably took everything in good part; and we were very careful never to say an insulting word about her red hair or pock-marks. In fact everything was said good-naturedly and taken in the same spirit. I never saw a real quarrel there either with the boys or with Mother Coqua.

As soon as M. Michon had finished his thanksgiving and attended to the few parishioners that came, he returned. All noise was hushed and we took breakfast, with a good appetite and pleasant words. All this preliminary matter was over at half-past seven; and we were told to go to the study-room, the former coach house, which had been neatly arranged for its present purpose and could contain more than fifty boys seated on benches on both sides of four long tables. When we reached it we found our books and writing materials inside of small desks with which the boarders

alone were provided. None of the day scholars had yet arrived, and we remained very quiet, preparing for class under the supervision of one of the older students.

At about eight-thirty the externes began coming, took their seats without noise, and began to read or write. This study-time lasted until nine-thirty, when a little bell gave the signal, and all the boys ran away for recreation. The day students took it in the large yard which divided the study-room from the boys' garden; but it was in this thickly planted bower full of fruit trees and flowering shrubs that the boarders generally amused themselves. At ten o'clock the bell rang again for class. The externes had it in the common study-room.

If the weather was unpropitious the boarders had their recitations in the house, either in a small parlor near the dining-room, or in one of our bedrooms. Those of us who were just beginning Latin had for their teacher one of the big students. The more advanced among us had the advantage of receiving our instruction from the good *vicaire* himself, who taught two classes each day. I was happy enough to be a full year under his tuition. If the weather was fine, neither rainy, nor too hot nor too cold, we were told at nine-thirty to which part of a large enclosure, just on the other side of the street, we were to go for class, and there wait for our teacher. The place must be known to be appreciated.

On the other side of the street, or rather, road, there lived an excellent family of market gardeners. They had rented a small farm of about twelve acres, not as wide as it was long; and its long side ran along the beautiful Sèvres river, which was parallel to our street, and fell into the Loire at the west end of Nantes. To

reach its banks we went along a broad avenue, bordered on both sides by a tall hawthorn hedge, with here and there some fruit trees, particularly, I remember, a small almond tree which was always in full blossom the latter part of February. At the end of the avenue, to the left of it, we entered a vegetable garden where we stopped but rarely; but when we did, we sat down on a circular bench which stood around the largest fig tree I ever saw. If we had not been told to stay there we passed into a second, and much larger, garden, which besides vegetables for the market contained many fruit trees, and a fine little grove of shade trees on the bank of the Sèvres. Sometimes we were told to sit down along the banks of the stream, but it was only when the sun was hot. Oftener we went to a terrace which ran along the whole ground on the side opposite to the river, which could be seen from it to a great distance.

Occasionally we were told to go still further on. Then we found at the termination of the main alley a wicket which led to a wild spot that appeared never to have been cultivated. It was surrounded by hills, and in the centre of a kind of miniature valley there stood a group of half a dozen wild trees which at noon cast a deep and cool shade. When for the first time I read the story of Robinson Crusoe, at M. Michon's school, I imagined that his rustic habitation surrounded by hedges, and concealed behind thick bushes and young trees, was exactly like this sequestered spot, which the noise of the big city of Nantes never reached.

For two years, I frequently recited my lessons under the large fig tree of the first enclosure, or in the grove, and on the terrace of the second, or finally in a solitude worthy of a modern Crusoe. M. Michon evidently

thought that boys ought not to be brought up monotonously, always kept in the same rooms, always placed amid the same scenery. Variety was his motto and it agreed very well with my taste. I had never been so happy in my life. For I had all the advantages of Mother Richard's rural house, and the priceless one of being well taught.

Recitations over, we strolled for about half an hour in the beautiful grounds along the Sèvres. We often threw into the water slender lines with hook and bait and drew out some small fish; we also ran after butterflies or looked at insects; and it was there that I conceived a taste for the study of nature. Finally dinner-time drawing near, we went leisurely home and found the table ready when we arrived.

In the afternoon, study began at two; class at three, and at five the day was over for study, unless some of us wished to read privately, which I often did. The most curious part of the order of the day, however, was the time which followed supper. This may surprise some strait-laced disciplinarians; but at the risk of shocking their ideas of propriety, the thing must out. They may find that after all M. Michon was perfectly right.

He had besides his school a large parish to administer, and the reader may have already asked himself what he did for it. We have seen him say his Mass and remain a short time in the church, where he received the parishioners that came. That is, he received sick calls at that time and heard, perhaps, some confessions. Then directly after breakfast when we were in the study-room or in recreation, he went to visit the sick, and was ready for his class at ten. From ten to five he had

not much to do in the parish. When, however, there was some urgent sick call (which seldom happened) we missed him at dinner. It was very rarely indeed that he could not teach his class. Then we had no recitation, or he placed his own advanced class under the care of the best of his big students for some particular recitation, as grammar or geography. But, in general, from ten to five he was with us, and we were sorry indeed when we missed him, for we all loved him as if he had been our mother.

At five he went usually to church, to hear confessions, and we spent our time the best way we could, either reading or amusing ourselves in our garden when the days were long and pleasant. At half-past seven the good *vicaire* returned for supper, which he took sometimes hurriedly to go back to church. This he did usually during Advent or Lent.

After supper began the good time for us, for we were to be under the immediate supervision of Mother Coqua. She had nothing to do during the long evenings but mending her stockings or sewing her petticoats. Her kitchen was the only room in the house which was at that time lighted; and in winter there was a big fire in the chimney. The stately study-room was buried in the darkness of the arctic regions during December, and the temperature there was not inviting. We in fact never entered it, except for two or three hours in the day, as was mentioned above.

The best thing to do, therefore, was to sit around the fire and tell stories, or have our fun. Although the good woman looked sour enough with her red hair and ugly face, she was far from being sour in her disposition, and we experienced it every day. As she was

an excellent cook she knew how to compound many little delicacies, which were destined for us when we were good boys. With milk and cream (which are extremely cheap in Nantes) a handful or two of good meal, and some eggs, she was able to make soft cakes of every description, equal in flavor to the ambrosia of the gods. At least, we thought so, and it was the same as if it had been the thing.

But as the Coqua was a disciplinarian as well as a cook, it was at this time that she used her authority over us *pour nous chapitrer*. Let me explain this term. In convents the abbot or the abbess often hold a chapter —*chapitre* in French—where the defects or breaches of the rule of which the brethren or sisters have been guilty, are proclaimed, and a proper penance is imposed. This Mother Coqua used to do in her kitchen whenever any of us had rambled in the garden at study-time, or fired stones at birds, or plucked fruit from the trees, in contravention of the well-known rule. The rule was, we could eat all that had fallen on the ground, but not touch that hanging on the branches. Some scrapegraces among us sometimes helped the fruit to fall, and Mother Coqua, if not too busy at the time, could see it from her apartment. Occasionally, therefore, a solemn scene was enacted after supper, in the room where she ruled as a queen, *en souveraine*. "What have you been doing to-day, you naughty Gus; prowling about in the garden like a thief, when you ought to have been at study?" Then I held my head down, though sometimes I was bold enough to answer: "I had a headache, Madame, and I had to take the open air." "I am afraid you do not tell the truth," she would reply, "as I saw you bending down and looking into the

gooseberry bushes; did you not pluck any? Tell me the truth." Then I would confess and beg her pardon; for I would not have told her a lie. "Very well," she would then say; "I have some fine charlotte russe; Hubert and Chatelain will eat it; you will not touch it to-night." This was the discipline of the house.

But except on rare occasions of that kind, the kitchen was the scene of jollity for an hour or so every night. For instance, Hubert received, on one occasion, from his father, a nice boat, a foot and a half long, in the form of a brig with its masts and gear, in order, I suppose, that the boy might begin to learn naval architecture. As there were several large tubs in an outhouse near the kitchen, the Coqua was easily prevailed upon to bring in one of them, and fill it with water. Then the owner of the ship placed it upon that improvised ocean, and we began to blow with all our might to make it go from one side to the other. We were soon out of breath, when Pineau, the biggest boy among us, exclaimed: "You are very simple, indeed; trust me for wind." Then he took the fire bellows, of which no one else had thought, and there was a roar of laughter in which Mother Coqua herself joined heartily.

But these are trifles: we must come to Advent and Lent. During those seasons Mother Coqua was absent from the kitchen in the evenings. Twice in the week we went to church, where the good *vicaire* called the people for some religious service. This consisted in the singing of canticles, which he himself intoned and directed; of a solid instruction from him which kept the people attentive, and in a sober mood of religious feeling; finally of the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which he gave in conclusion. I preferred these

holy rites a great deal to our fun in the kitchen, and I never heard any other boy complain that they were too long or too tedious. The part of these exercises I liked best, however, was the singing of the *Miserere* at the beginning of the Benediction. This was chanted by the whole congregation in a half voice of tenderness and devotion, which often brought tears to my eyes, though I could not yet understand the psalm in Latin. I soon learned it, however, because I asked a lesson or two for that purpose from good M. Michon, who was delighted with my demand, and kissed me affectionately when I first asked him.

There is no need of mentioning that during Christmas week and the week before Easter, we went to church every night for at least an hour. The parishioners were delighted with those ceremonies; and although most of them had been Jacobins during the Revolution, they were sensibly returning to the practice of religion, which they had nearly abandoned. The excellent curate was working hard, but at least he had the satisfaction of seeing his labors well rewarded. The church was full every evening. Thus were our evenings spent after supper—either in the kitchen or in church; we stayed up until about ten o'clock, when *Monsieur le Vicaire* came back for the night. In winter we then met together in the small parlor where Mother Coqua had prepared a small fire. Prayers were said very devoutly; the excellent man added a few words to make us think of God on going to bed; then he embraced us all, and leading the way, he went up to his room, which was at the end of the second story beyond our own bedchambers. He was not, however, allowed to take his rest immediately, for he had usually most of his breviary

to say, and he never could persuade himself that his incessant occupations for the glory of God exempted him from the sacred obligation of saying his breviary.

He once related to us at dinner a little story on that subject which I have not forgotten. It had taken place just the night before, and this was the substance of it. He had been busy the whole day, either visiting the sick or hearing confessions; we had not seen him except at dinner. He came back from church at eleven o'clock in the evening and went straight to his room, as we were all asleep. He himself felt sleepy, but remarking that there was still an hour before midnight, he began to say his office, of which he could not read a single "hour" during the day. He went through the "little hours" and a part of Vespers. Perceiving that he was falling asleep, he stood up, took his candlestick in one hand and his breviary in the other, and went on reading. "My dear friends," he added, "I don't know how far I went, for I fell down without knowing when or how, and when I woke up this morning at daylight, I found I was stretched on the floor with my book on one side of me and my candlestick on the other. The candle had evidently gone out in falling, or otherwise I might have set the house afire. But you must know, children, that the kind Providence of God always comes to our help on those occasions." What struck me more than anything else was that he appeared to fear that his obligation with regard to the reciting of his office had not been complied with. He said a word which I do not now remember, to the effect that he might have prevented his sleep and fall. He soon, however, corrected himself and said, laughing: "I have always understood that on those occasions the part of the

breviary which is not recited, is thrown by the angels *dans le greniers du Pape,* who has himself to see to it."

This is a beautiful legend which I never heard from anyone else, and which must console all good priests who for like reasons are prevented from saying a part of their breviary.

Our daily programme is now complete with one exception. This was a long walk we took in the evenings of the months of June and July, when the days are so long in Nantes that you can read in your room without candle until ten o'clock at night. There was often at that time a change in our way of life, which has always remained in my memory as by far the pleasantest part of my existence on earth.

There were during those months no confessions in the church after seven o'clock. The only extra labor of the good *vicaire* consisted in the preparation of the children for their First Communion, as this was always in August. But this preparation of the children took place during the day, so that in the evenings M. Michon could amuse himself, and he did not think he could do so without our having a share in it. At half-past seven we had no supper, but only a lunch; some bread, butter and fruit. Then we all went out, leaving Mother Coqua alone in her kitchen. We did not enter even the fine enclosure where we often had our recitations. This was too near our house, and the object was bodily exercise and having a view of the country.

At seven during June the sun is still high up above the horizon in that part of France, so that we just had, at parting, a full concert of all the birds of the country; they always sing more sweetly before they retire for the night. We heard them all around us. There was

the cuckoo and the black cap, and the whistling blackbird, and the frolicking goldfinch with his short song, as he flew from bush to bush. The nightingale, however, could not be heard everywhere. She chooses with such fastidiousness the places where she gives her concerts, that one must look for her sometimes at a great distance. We usually reached the nightingale concert hall about sunset, which is the time when her throat is in trim, and when she emits her first and sweetest notes. Can the best flute player imitate the softness of her song? Can the best opera singer equal the expression and rapidity of her warble?

I had never heard the nightingale at Mother Richard's. None of them made their nests in that neighborhood. The first nightingales I heard dwelt in the groves along the banks of the Sèvres river; and we had to walk more than two miles in the country before we reached the spot. We would willingly have walked twice the distance for the pleasure of enjoying this treat. As soon as we arrived at a convenient place we stretched ourselves on the grass, as near the stream as we could without being wet, M. Michon being in the midst of us and as completely a child in feeling as any of us. The birds were in a copse of thick and tall bushes to the left, at a distance only of a hundred yards or so. Our first coming generally disturbed them, and they remained mute for a few minutes. But they were soon emboldened by the perfect silence we kept, and the music began. It is impossible to give an idea of it to those who have never heard it. When there are half a dozen male birds within hearing, which is often the case, the softest instruments never could charm the ear to the same degree. The flute and the hautboy and the clarinet can-

not express the tender feelings which come from a living throat, and are at best wooden machines deprived of the thrilling effect produced by animated and delicate organs. The female human voice alone can equal and sometimes surpass the tender pathos of the little songster in her soft mood. As to the glory of her notes when she suddenly uses all her power to silence her rivals, how can the clarion or the trumpet or the cornet be compared to it?

We used to remain for nearly an hour in the most profound silence listening with rapture to the nightingale's melody; and it was always with regret that we heard from our master that it was time for us to depart. We did not, however, go every night in summer to hear the queen of singing birds: there were several other places of interest to visit.

The whole parish of St. Jacques was not composed of the Jacobins who have been described in a previous chapter. M. Michon was beginning to attract even these to the church. Yet he had very little intercourse with them and saw them only when they called him to visit their sick people. But there were families in the district of a different character. He occasionally went to see them in our evening rambles, for none of them lived in the thickly inhabited part of the city. They were rich people and spent the summer in nice country houses. In order to give an idea of France in all its aspects at that time (which is my aim), we must briefly consider the wealthier classes, such as they were around us. Many of them belonged to the numerous, and since the Revolution, all-powerful class of the *bourgeoisie;* they were nearly all of them great Voltaireans.

They never appeared in church, and the ladies often differed very little from the gentlemen in this regard. Old men, here and there, and some who were of age when the Revolution began, showed respect for clergymen. But the young men brought up in the *lycées* under Bonaparte, or going through their classes in the colleges of the Bourbons, were bitter foes of priests and churchgoers. The sneers of Voltaire were familiar to them; and unfortunately this habit of laughing at religion was to grow until the end of the Restoration and the Revolution of 1830. It was then that Casimir-Périer, a great Liberal, still a man of an acute mind, used to say that shortly Catholicism would not have any adherents except among some few *dévotes* (female devotees), who alone would go to church. The progress of this spirit of infidelity will be noticed in these pages. In 1818, the evil had already spread extensively.

To compensate for it in some degree, the aristocratic families, so corrupt at the moment of the great explosion in 1789, had returned, most of them, to the practice of religion, and the ladies particularly were devoted to all kinds of good works. There were some of them in St. Jacques' parish, and M. Michon could not but go occasionally to see them. He used to do so during our evening rambles. He took us with him, left us in the grounds of the mansions, which were often splendid and extensive, and entered the household alone, where he remained for about half an hour or a little more. Meanwhile we could ramble at will, and generally the lady sent us a basket of excellent fruit, "that the boys," she said, "might not be tempted to pluck unripe fruit in the vegetable garden." The fact is that we did not generally stop in the vegetable garden, though it was

certainly pleasant to look at those beautiful *espaliers*, as they are called, that is, lattice frames on which every kind of fruit tree were trained along the walls, presenting to the rays of the sun the hanging pears, or peaches or plums. We preferred a great deal to go to the *orangerie*, empty at that time, but surrounded by orange, lemon and pomegranate trees, which were taken in only during the winter. This was another subject of study in natural history which we did not neglect. We were very fond also of going to the large pond, which we usually found there, and loosening the boat we sped over the water with more animation than when we had only Hubert's brig in a big tub in Mother Coqua's kitchen.

But what was M. Michon doing? Was he talking of politics? This charge was often brought against the French clergy during the Restoration, and ever since; they were all unbending Royalists, and wished to bring back the mediæval abuses, and the tithes and feudal rights, etc., etc., and finally, the priests and the nobles conspired for that object.

M. Michon was certainly a Royalist, the son of a Vendean, and a Vendean himself, and when at table he spoke of the Revolution he showed his contempt and horror of it by relating what he had seen. But was he an enemy to all Frenchmen who did not share his opinions? It would have been a calumny to say so. He did not inquire what were the political opinions of those parents who sent him their children. We have seen of what various elements the school was composed. Pineau was the son of a Jacobin turned Liberal only when Jacobinism was at a discount. It was said that the father of Hubert had condescended, perhaps

through fear, to work on a large scale for Carrier. The uncle of Boyer, who had placed him in this school, had been all his life a staunch Republican; and he boasted of having fought against the Vendeans during the Terror. Chatelain was a nondescript; no one among us ever knew to what party his parents belonged. The only Royalists among us were Verhoeven and myself. The fact is that we never quarrelled for being of different parties; and we felt that M. Michon would not have allowed it.

It would be absurd, therefore, to suppose that when he was conversing with la Comtesse de ——, or la Marquise de ——, or le Vicomte de ——, he was conspiring with them to bring back the abuses of the ancient régime. If he spoke of politics with them, it was most probably to know what was then going on, for he seldom read the papers. I think he received one, perhaps *La Quotidienne*, the best of the Legitimist papers; of this, however, I am not sure, as I never saw him read any journal. He was, moreover, too busy to spend much time at it.

When rich people in France are Christians they are extremely charitable to the poor. Clergymen are usually the channels of their charity. There were not yet any societies organized for those purposes, except, perhaps, in Paris. That of St. Vincent de Paul, whose origin was due to Ozanam, was not yet thought of. The Daughters of Charity were just beginning to appear in Nantes, if I remember, but they had not yet come as far as St. Jacques'. It was later that I saw for the first time their well-known *cornettes* in that part of the city. M. Michon, therefore, had no other means of helping the poor than the benevolence of his rich parishioners;

and he must have frequently applied for it. His personal means were very limited. He did not get a penny from the government, as he was not a *vicaire de première classe*, and *Monsieur le curé* found, no doubt, that he had scarcely enough for his own needs in the pittance granted by the state to religion in this poor parish. The good *vicaire* had absolutely nothing to expect beyond the stipend of his Masses, the meager dues he got for baptisms, marriages, and funerals, beyond the inadequate tuition fees paid for five or six little boys. He never said a word of all this in his communications with us at table or in recreation. He observed to the letter the Gospel precept that the left hand must not know what the right gives.

But to return to our evening rambles in the summer months. We generally came home at ten o'clock, and found a good supper ready for us. We all had an excellent appetite. There were a few evenings, perhaps three or four during the whole summer, when we did not go to bed before midnight. The most celebrated of these was St. John's Day, the 24th of June, for it was the feast day of M. Michon, his name being Jean Baptist. The house was then *en fête*. One of the ladies who helped the good *vicaire* most generously took upon herself to have our parlor and garden neatly arranged for the occasion. She sent several of her best carpets, arm chairs, curtains, etc., with two men who arranged everything as for a prince. At one end of the big parlor a platform was raised like a throne and was covered with the best carpet that had been sent; another was spread over the remainder of the room, and another served as a floor in the corner of the garden where a temporary arbor was made.

After a day of recreation the solemnity began at eight o'clock, just after supper. M. Michon was seated on the platform in the parlor between two gentlemen of the parish who had been invited. Then each of us little boys offered him our compliments. But each of us had also received from his mother a present for M. Michon. One had a missal for the altar, not too costly, but tasteful; another a fine snuffbox, another a couple of small orange trees already showing some blossoms to adorn the Virgin's altar in the church, etc., etc. This was followed by a universal kissing of the good man by everyone present, not only the big students and the little boarders, but also the best behaved boys (externes) If the parish school. This was a time of hilarious joy, as the good man said a pleasant or witty word to everyone, and he was often very witty; at least, we found him so.

Directly after we adjourned to the garden, where fireworks had been prepared on a scale commensurate with our means; that is, very moderate and not too expensive. However, there were besides crackers and *serpenteaux*, three or four rockets, a dozen or so of Roman candles, without speaking of wheels and other pyrotechnics. M. Michon was seated with his invited friends in the bower in which the carpet had been spread; and we of course were all the time running from the back of his chair to all the corners of the garden. From time to time, Mother Coqua brought us to the kitchen to give us some refreshments; but she took a great deal of pride in the confection of the *sorbets* and chocolate she sent on a tray to the party under the arbor.

When dusk came, that is, nearly ten o'clock, it was a truly beautiful sight, though the custom had not yet

been introduced, of suspending Chinese lanterns in the trees. Every object, if indistinct, could be dimly perceived, and when some big piece of fireworks was exploded, it was a pleasure to see the groups of big or little boys with joy depicted in their attitudes, and to hear their exclamations when the discharge of some rocket or Roman candle was a particular success. We had no music, as there would not have been money enough in our treasury to pay for a band. But we supplied it by our acclamations and by the occasional refrain of a song. Do not tell me that there was more happiness on earth in any place, or ballroom, than was felt that night in M. Michon's garden.

Our daily programme, ordinary and extraordinary, is now complete. How far was such a system beneficial to the boys? M. Michon, in opening his school, had not for his object to amuse himself with his children, as he called them. He did not intend mainly to contribute to the present happiness of a dozen big and small boys; though this is undoubtedly something worth doing. He wanted to prepare half a dozen students for the Church by a good course of French and Latin classics. The little boys paid for the big boys and received a fair compensation by the instruction imparted to them. The object, therefore, was not to amuse them, but to instruct them. Did he succeed? And did the many other similar classes organized throughout France prove an advantage to the pupils? Of course, there were differences among these rectory schools. Only last week (1878) I read the biography of Cardinal Pie of Poitiers. He also began to study Latin with five other boys in the house of the *curé* of his native village. All these modest institutions powerfully contributed to

form the French clergy, which had so much to do with the revival of France in the nineteenth century. It may be asked however, Did the pupils of these schools make progress in learning?

We certainly did not become dunces. As we were conversing and playing together half of the day, we acquired wit and the power of conversation. We were great at repartee and could argue, logically or not, so as, nevertheless, to draw conclusions from good or bad premises, and this is a great part of education.

But beside this at the end of each year we had acquired as much knowledge as students generally gather up in the best grammar schools. The boys trained as M. Michon trained us stood well in the college classes which they entered after leaving the rectory school. In many colleges the pupils lose a great deal of their time, because the daily programme is unattractive. I am convinced that most college students could learn in four years the knowledge they gather in eight.

It has been said that M. Michon also established a convent of nuns. He also devoted himself to the education of the boys of his parish; for he had in his house a large parochial school taught by himself and by his young men. He attached great importance to this, as he knew that the education of children was the best means to bring back the men of the poorer class to the practice of religion, which most of them had abandoned. And he took equal care of the girls, though the need was not so urgent, as French women were still generally Christian.

At that time it was extremely difficult to find school Sisters, and there were very few female convents in France. The first revolution had entirely destroyed

those that existed formerly. Napoleon had discouraged as much as he could their re-establishment, so that nearly all parish priests were obliged to have recourse to shifts and expedients. The worthy *vicaire* looked into his little flock of female devotees, and he found a few who felt an inclination for the religious state; he selected five of them who, he thought, would make excellent school-mistresses. They were to be called Sisters, and he would give them rules of his own making. He had no doubt consulted Messrs. De Tremeac and Bodinier, who were, I think, at the time, vicars general, *sede vacante*. Since the death of Duvoisin, no bishop had been appointed for Nantes owing, first, to the differences between the government of Napoleon and the Holy See, and afterwards owing to the hostile feelings of the Bourbons toward Pius VII, because he had crowned Bonaparte. The first bishop nominated by Louis XVIII for Nantes was D'Andigne in 1822. Duvoisin had died in 1813.

M. Michon got the authorization he desired; he therefore rented a large house on the street or road leading from the church to his own establishment. The building was fifty feet long and had a spacious garden in the rear. The good man himself never spoke to us of his convent at table or at recreation, and we were perfectly ignorant of what went on inside. He had given a uniform to his Sisters. It was not, however, the usual nun's habit, but resembled the modest garment of a respectable seamstress, with a larger cap than usual and a very large black veil.

The five Sisters carried on an academy of about twenty little boarders, besides a large number of parish girls who were day scholars. They had a kind of pew

or enclosed bench in the church, at an angle of the transept looking towards the main altar; and they were there every morning with the little boarders at the *vicaire's* Mass, as well as on Sundays and holidays, or whenever there were public exercises in the church. At catechism also, which the good man taught on Sundays and twice a week, the Sisters had special charge of all the girls who were preparing for their First Communion, generally to the number of more than three hundred. It was always remarked that the girls answered better than the boys the questions asked of them by the priest. But what pleased me most was that the large number of French canticles that we learned and sang at the beginning or at the end of catechism, were always sung alternately by boys and girls, so that after the three hundred shrill voices of the first had finished a verse, the three hundred sweet tongues and throats of the second warbled the next. The effect was always charming.

Though these Sisters were not cloistered, they never appeared in public, except when they were going to church or coming from it. I remember to have been inside their house only three times. The first time it was to carry a letter which the good *vicaire* had written to the "Mother." I was not stopped at the door. The second time I entered the house was on Christmas day, 1818. Christmas was the only day in the year when M. Michon could say Mass in the private chapel of the Sisters. For they had a small oratory where they said their prayers every day. But they had to go to church for Mass, as M. Michon could say only one Mass daily, and he had to say this in church for the people who wished to hear it. At Christmas he said two in the

church and went for the last to the convent; because *M. le curé* sang high Mass on that great occasion. The good *vicaire* had taken me with him that day to serve at the altar, and I was strongly impressed with the solemnity of everything around me. The little chapel was full, as it contained beside the priest and his server, five Sisters, and more than twenty children. They sang sweetly during Mass, and at communion all those who were of age approached the Holy Table. I had heard of convents before; this was the first time I had seen one, and I found it the most delightful place I could imagine after Paradise.

The third and last time I entered that house was for a very different solemnity. There was to be a public execution performed with the ferule of *Monsieur le vicaire.* All the boys of our house, especially the day scholars, had been most strictly enjoined to be respectful to the Sisters and their pupils, and as more than sixty rough parochial schoolboys had to pass and repass before the convent four times every week-day, the windows of the same being always open during summer, it must appear surprising that during the two happy years I spent there, nothing reprehensible happened except once. A big boy of fifteen of the name of Martin had addressed very rough and coarse words to one of the little girls; and it was reported to the Mother, who forthwith informed M. Michon. This Martin was not wicked, but extremely uproarious and tricky. Of all our day scholars he was the best known to everybody and everybody felt a kind of liking for him, on account of the openness of his character. He had seriously offended by his tongue and he was to be punished for it.

The time chosen for this punishment was the hour of the girls' morning class. They all assembled in the largest room and M. Michon, walking into it with his five little boarders as witnesses, ordered Martin to stand up in the middle of the room and to stretch out one of his hands. M. Michon was strong and muscular; it was reported that he could take an iron rod and break it with both his hands. He was not to be laughed at on the present occasion. Of course he did not intend to use an iron rod to strike the poor fellow. But he drew from his pocket an ugly discipline made of strongly twisted twine, and began to use it on Martin's palm. The strokes were so well aimed that they went home without ever missing. The poor culprit, with many grins and contortions on his face, thought probably, after a few strokes, it would be more tolerable to substitute his left hand for his right. He was not forbidden to do so; but the consequence was that he suffered in both instead of one only, and when the flogging was over his hands were as red as cherries, without any bleeding, however. After the flogging, Martin was treated just as before; and M. Michon would not allow us to make the poor sufferer the butt of our ridicule. The boy, consequently, never resented the flogging and he always acknowledged that he had received but his deserts.

The good master of our school thus discharged all his duties. He saw that we studied and learned; he kept us at the same time in good humor by the long recreations he gave us, and the good cheer of his table. But we knew that if we had deserved correction, we would have received it at his hands. The parents of his students were not sorry to hear that corporal punish-

ment was sometimes inflicted in his house. The cry against it, which has since been made in France, had not so far been heard; it was not yet a law that a schoolmaster who strikes a guilty student must either go to jail or pay a heavy fine.

In general, clergymen, particularly in country places, did wonders in reorganizing the Christian education of the people, which had been altogether neglected since the beginning of the French Revolution. Let everyone examine to what extent this was done. Primary education in France was in the hands of mercenary teachers, who did not, or perhaps could not, instruct the children in their catechism. Secondary education was given over altogether to the Université de France, a State institution very baneful in its influence. If the Bourbons allowed the bishops to keep at least their Petits Séminaires under their exclusive control, the number of young men who could be admitted into them with the intention of studying for the Church was limited, and there was fear that before long they would have no scholars and consequently no vocations for the priesthood. This was the case in several dioceses, particularly in those situated around Paris. The education of the clergy would soon be of a very inferior character; every bishop being obliged to ordain young men in a hurry, in order to provide for the country parishes, which otherwise would have remained without priests. Thus the French clergy, which even in the eighteenth century had been far from brilliant, so that the church was poorly defended against the witty attacks of Voltaire and his adherents, would fall still lower intellectually in the nineteenth.

At the beginning of the Restoration there was a

strong revival of thought and art in France. The age promised to be one of great activity and talent in all the departments of literature. Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, had already acquired a great reputation and authority with the reading public. Many young men gathered around them and new schools in literary art were forming, full of vitality and hope. Was the clergy to be reduced to a wretched inferiority as compared with the bulk of the nation? If the candidates for the altar were few in number, and badly educated, no men of talent would be developed among them, and the Church would be altogether eclipsed. Not only could she not bring back to the fold those who had already lost their faith, but she would not be able to form a new generation of young Frenchmen attached to religion and practicing it. In that case France would now be without the lay champions of the Church, who have fought so valiantly in her behalf.

The picture I have drawn of M. Michon is that of an intelligent, refined, zealous and thoroughly good man, and I have not overstated his merits. Lest, however, it may be thought that I have painted an ideal and not a man of flesh and blood, I may add that he was not wholly without foibles. The first, perhaps, was an excessive austerity, probably the result of the Jansenistic tendencies of some of the French clergy before the Revolution; an example or two will explain my meaning.

I have already stated that I made my first Communion in the parish of St. Jacques after receiving instruction in catechism from the good *vicaire*. Although very young, I felt deeply the happiness of that day. M. Michon would not hear the confessions of his little boys, and sent them to his next neighbor, the *curé* de Reze,

a stern man of the name of Billot. He refused to receive our confidential little stories which I would have preferred a great deal to pour into his ear, rather than into that of his forbidding confrère; consequently he could not know the extent of the spiritual consolation I had experienced from my first reception of Our Lord. Still he had remarked the profound impression it had made on me. On the evening of that day he expressed to me his own satisfaction, by pressing me to his heart, and asking me to pray for him before going to sleep that night. Yet he would not allow me to receive Communion again till the following Christmas. Even this he appeared to consider an especial favor. The other boys did not receive the Holy Eucharist again till full twelve months after, on the day which was absurdly called that of second Communion. M. Michon followed the custom which prevailed everywhere, at least in that part of France. Surely it would have been better to have allowed the boys to receive Holy Communion more frequently.

Another incident showing the excessive strictness of my old master is the following: We often had birds in cages, the care of which was confided to us. At one time I was the happy possessor of two goldfinches that consumed a great quantity of seed, chiefly of hemp and rape. For the sake of variety and also of economy I gathered in our rambles a good handful of plantain seed, which is found everywhere on the country roads. One Sunday afternoon I gathered plantain seed without thinking of the day, but M. Michon saw me when we returned home. He spoke sternly to me and ordered me to throw the seed away on the spot. Still the good man was far from being a puritan. It was only a

rigoristic notion derived from his moral theology which extended the idea of servile work as far as possible.

Such incidents only proved that he was a truly conscientious man. His rigorism also appeared in Lent and Advent. The few among us who had reached the age of twenty-one would not have taken a glass of water before twelve o'clock, and M. Michon was most rigid in that respect.

I should have been highly pleased to spend at least four or five years in M. Michon's pleasant house before entering college. But the vicar-general of the diocese of Nantes had formed the project of founding in the city a house of secular priests, who would give missions in the rural districts, whilst the city parishes would be evangelized by the Missionaires de France, whose superior was M. de Rauzan. M. Michon was wisely chosen as one of those evangelical laborers who would spend their lives in going from village to village, and in giving, several times a year, retreats in Nantes to those who should wish to spend a week in prayer and meditation. This new institution was to be called La Maison de St. François de Sales; it still exists and its inmates during sixty years have done a great amount of good in the diocese. M. Michon, therefore, announced to our parents, when we went out on vacation in August, 1819, that his school was about to close and that we could not return in October.

CHAPTER V

ECCLESIASTICAL EDUCATION IN FRANCE UNDER THE BOURBONS

When I left M. Michon's house in August, 1819, my parents had not as yet determined upon the college to which I should be sent. There were several of them in the diocese under the charge of country *curés*, where the boys studied until they could enter the Petit Séminaire *en quatrième*. While investigating their respective merits my father sent me to the country for vacation. He never left Nantes with my mother before the middle of September, when during the vintage he spent a month in the neighborhood of Ancenis or Oudon. I was sent to board in a good farmer's family near the latter of these two places. They were merely peasants, but excellent people; and I usually passed a great part of my vacation with them. I had therefore a good opportunity to know this class of people, and found that what has been said of Mère Richard's home was generally true there also. They were all Christian people, poor but cheerful and contented; never said a word of politics, with which they had nothing to do, since the suffrage did not extend to them even for the most common affairs of their villages and townships, and they lived exactly as their fathers had done two centuries before. I fished in the Loire for minnows, perch and other small

fish, caught frogs in the ponds near the house; ate plenty of pears and grapes, which the peasants in that country never sold but kept for their own use; went occasionally in the long evenings of summer, with boys of the hamlet where I lived, to catch birds *à la pipée*, a most amusing sport for children, and invariably increased in flesh and good humor, without bestowing a thought on books or study. From all I have seen of the peasant class, first in my infancy, then during eight or ten of my vacations, and still later on when I was a young man, I am of the opinion that strict morality, sincere Christian feeling and a disposition to please, were the general characteristics of those poor people. They had their defects, no doubt, but I confess I did not see many of them.

My father did not make up his mind to what institution he would send me as quickly as he expected. It was only in January, 1820, that I entered the Petit Séminaire, to pass there six years of my life. The time I spent there, and the occasions I had subsequently of knowing the state of secondary instruction in France, enable me, I think, to express a correct judgment on this education. I am convinced that they greatly helped to bring about the moral revival of France. This revival was due to the French clergy and the clergy were mainly instructed in the Petit Séminaire.

My first impression, however, of the Petit Séminaire was unfavorable. The idea of remaining in it for six years was at first unpleasant. Even if the look of the place and its surroundings, if the company of its four hundred boisterous students, if the demure demeanor of its professors and prefects, had not been the very reverse of what had so much delighted me at St. Jacques',

I could scarcely have become reconciled to its strait-laced daily programme.

The place was far too small for so large an institution. Three irregular yards enclosed by high walls or by ugly buildings; the largest of these yards being scarcely two hundred feet long by one hundred wide, and the smallest less than one-half of the first, were the only places we had for recreation. Four hundred boys, from ten to twenty, had to find room in those enclosures, planted with stunted linden trees, for running, base-ball or walking every day in the week but one, when we were taken to the country.

Except a long row of rooms one story high, running along the Rue St. Clement, on both sides of the entrance gate, all the buildings of the seminary consisted of edifices of a mean architecture, three stories high and placed without any attempt at symmetry. There was, it is true, a small garden at the end of the largest enclosure, ending in a sharp angle; but this was naturally reserved for the faculty, and the hard-worked teachers had scarcely room enough to walk there and say their breviary.

The bishop on whom the Petit Séminaire depended could not be held responsible for this awkward state of affairs. The place had been given by the government of Napoleon, who did not wish his bishops to have large Petit Séminaires, and no additional ground could be purchased contiguous to it. A change under the Restoration was unlikely and consequently nothing could be done to improve matters.

To the inconvenience of unsuitable grounds was added the impossibility of cooking appetizing meals for a community of more than four hundred and fifty persons.

The fare was abundant and possibly wholesome, but it was coarse and coarsely prepared. Fortunately the appetite of boys is always good, and when we came to be accustomed to the fare we did not generally complain. It was, however, something of a trial for me after having been so long under the skilful care of Mother Coqua.

But what became my greatest difficulty was the daily programme. Recreation was limited to a quarter of an hour after the morning class, an hour after dinner, and a half an hour for luncheon at the end of the afternoon class. In summer, however, we had three-quarters of an hour for play after supper; but what was all this compared to our long amusements at St. Jacques'? The worst was the harsh supervision of the prefects and teachers, in recreation, at study and in class. After the gentle treatment that I had experienced under good M. Michon, it was hard, very hard for me, to be subject to so many punishments; for instance to be deprived of recreation, reduced to a crust of dry bread at dinner, or obliged to write endless lines, in the study-room, on Sundays and holy days, for some little breaches of the rule. Of course it was necessary. So large a number of boys cannot be treated the same as half a dozen, and it would have been unjust in me to have attributed to harshness of disposition on the part of the college authorities a strict rule which was necessary for good order.

All this was unavoidable, and at least it produced this good effect, that it early accustomed us to bear many things which have to be borne through life. If I had always been brought up under M. Michon's system, it is doubtful if I should have been prepared to encounter afterwards the buffetings of the world and the many disappointments to which man is subject, whatever

career he may follow. The education given in the Petits Séminaires was calculated to discipline the will of boys, so as to enable them to control their passions. It was a kind of Spartan training which really made men of us. Whatever influence the French clergy now possess, they owe to the six or eight years of seminary training. I have often thanked God that my pleasant life at St. Jacques' was so soon ended, and replaced by the ever-recurring trials of a place which appeared to me little better than a prison.

At least one thing was sufficient to render that painful life truly endurable if not attractive. This was the practice of religion which of itself can throw on a dungeon the sunshine of heaven. I perceived that in this one particular the seminary was certainly preferable to M. Michon's school. Many of the boys were accustomed to frequent Communion. In the chapel the conduct of the boys was always edifying, and by the way they used their *livres d'heures* it was evident that they knew what prayer was. And this was true not only of the boys who studied for the Church, but of the majority of the others, mostly sons of noblemen. Very few were satisfied with obeying the precept of the Church requiring Communion once a year at Easter. There were, it is true, some students of the middle classes who had to be urged on by gentle means to fulfil their Paschal duty, and who did not appear at the holy table at any other time during the year. These amounted to scarcely a dozen.

I chose as my confessor the teacher of my class, whom I liked on account of his quietness and gentleness of disposition. His name was Mérot, he had been ordained only a year or two before, and was not destined to live

long, as he suffered from lung disease. Unlike some of the other teachers and prefects he never gave way to anger; when he was displeased he quietly remonstrated, which produced more effect on his pupils than angry words or frequent punishments would have done.

I have known many other men of more impressive appearance and more profuse in their assurances of good will, but very few on whom I would rely more, and of whose sincerity I was more convinced. When I had an occasion to go to his room, he never embraced me as some others did, but every word that fell from his mouth appeared to me a grain of pure gold or a drop of honey. He was sincerity itself. He soon became extremely useful to me by directing my private studies.

There was very little display at the altar, because the seminary was far from being rich; but when the four hundred throats of men or young boys who formed the only choir that we knew intoned the Gloria or Credo at Mass, or the Psalms of David at Vespers, it sounded like the solemn voice of religion whose melody springs from the heart, and alone can give expression to supernatural feelings, transporting the soul to a world far higher than the present. How soon life's miseries are forgotten when the heart melts under the sway of the inspired songs of the Church! In their simplicity they act more powerfully on men's feelings than the best compositions of the great masters. If at Nantes we did not listen to the strains of Beethoven or of Mozart, we heard the movement of the angels' wings, and the still small voice of the Saviour speaking from His cradle, or from the rude bed of His cross. At least, this was the effect it had on me, and the exercise in our

poor chapel had such an attraction for us, chiefly on the days of general Communion, that whatever might be their length, no one ever complained of having found them tedious.

Art was not altogether set aside, but it was too simple to conceal the real beauty of the Liturgy. The worthy superior, the gentle and good-natured M. Sagory, who very often officiated, had a very melodious voice, and knew music well. I always felt delighted to hear him sing the Preface and during Holy Week the solemn chants of the morning services. Often at the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the best musical students of the college rendered compositions, which they had carefully prepared. On Holy Thursday afternoon instruments also were used in a concealed enclosure back of the repository. This, with Christmas week and Corpus Christi time, was the chief occasion of these artless displays, which were remembered afterwards the whole year long.

M. Mérot, meanwhile, was guiding me in my little devotions; and whenever I had any difficulty with a prefect, his words of encouragement and hope soon dispelled the clouds of trouble and vexation which had gathered around me.

The episcopal seminaries received no aid from the State and were consequently very poor. They had no libraries of any account and that of the students was wretched. The most pleasant and useful reading I could find in it, during my spare hours, were the *Spectacle de la Nature* of Pluche, the heavy histories of Rollin, the childish trash of the *Ami des Enfants* of Berquin, and the histories of Vertot, St. Réal and Berruyer. No poets could be obtained except Boileau, selections of

Corneille and Racine, the lyrics of J. B. Rousseau and Pompignan, together with the college plays and tales in Marotic style of Father Du Cerceau. Novels were, of course, totally excluded, unless the *Comte de Valmont* by Abbé Gérard be a novel. Those among us who were inclined to polemics could read the works of Barruel; and it was only in the hands of the most advanced students that the pungent and witty *Lettres de quelques Juifs* by the Abbé Guénée could be seen. From this it appears that not a single work of the present century was in the library. Our instructors seemed desirous of ostracizing the men of the nineteenth century.

Like the library the professors were antiquated and seemingly unfit to fulfil their important functions. Most of them had received an education even less thorough than our own, as they had been brought up under the Empire, when everything was done by the government to make the clergy inefficient. Their knowledge of Latin and Greek was in every respect elementary. No illustration and discussion of texts could be expected from them. All they required of us was that there should be no solecism or barbarism in our Latin themes, and no total missing of the sense in what were called our versions. We were taught to scan hexameters and pentameters, but no other kind of verse; and when we read Horace, the best of us would have been unable to give even the names of his metres. There was no hope that our masters would ever enlighten the world on Homeric poetry, or on the intricacies of Greek dramatists. Nay, more, none of them could have translated the prose of Tacitus, or the poetry of Juvenal into elegant French. They attempted

something of the kind for Virgil and Ovid, but I must say that it was rather a sorry attempt.

And there was nothing surprising in all this. They had been very poorly instructed when young. The bishop had to take them for the instructors of his future clergy, because he had no others, and he could not employ laymen for such a purpose. Had he attempted it, he would have found very few capable men, but he would have been wholly unable to offer them a sufficient salary. All he could give to his professors was their board and lodging, with three hundred francs ($60) yearly for their books and clothing. To these straitened circumstances was the Church reduced in prosperous and intellectual France; for France was at that time wonderfully prosperous materially, and as intellectual a nation as could be found in Europe.

The reader might infer from these conditions that the inferiority of the French clergy might continue or even increase, and that the young generation which was then forming in the Petits Séminaires would come out of them in a semi-idiotic state, to be thrown as so many simpletons in the midst of their bright contemporaries. But this would be a mistake. The boys educated in those houses were naturally as bright as those brought up in a totally different world. In the second place, the professors, though shorn of knowledge and literary acquirements, had, at least, good will, a sincere desire of preparing their boys for a career of usefulness, and were altogether devoted to their duty. If they were not great scholars, and knew little or nothing of the literature of the age, they nevertheless were men of sense and did their best to develop the minds of their pupils. We were not becoming idiots, or even

semi-idiots under their discipline. But if any one of us had received from heaven some spark of genius, he still had a chance, in that apparently dull place, to cultivate it, in order to take afterwards a prominent place in the society to whose salvation he wished to devote himself.

Let me illustrate this. I am *en sixième*, and M. Mérot is my professor as well as my confessor. There are, consequently, many pleasant ties between us, and I study with pleasure because I am sincerely attached to him. The instruction is most elementary and plain, and unfortunately it will continue so nearly to the end, for the reasons just assigned. I have in my hands most of the time the well-known book, *De Viris illustribus Urbis Romae*, and I write Latin phrases on l'Homond's Syntax. This is not a very pleasant thing for a boy of twelve, full of imagination and spirit, and the special kind which cannot be contented even by the elements of Greek mythology that I begin to learn. From the start all this stuff disgusted me, and I never in my life could take any interest in those absurd stories of gods and goddesses, heroes and demi-gods, flaming monsters and giant killers. I always preferred the amusing tales of fairies as related to me by my simple nurse in Brittany, the golden-hearted Donatienne.

What could I do when I found myself with no other means of developing my mind except dry tasks? I went to see M. Mérot, thinking he might find something more palatable for me; in fact, he soon found something better.

"You have leisure time, my dear friend," he said, "and I am glad of it. I will tell you what you can do

to employ it well. What reading book have you at this moment?"

"I took lately," said I, "Vertot's *Révolutions Romaines*, because I thought this reading would agree with my *De Viris*."

"Capital!" M. Mérot exclaimed, "bring it to me."

Then he had the goodness to show me in what the analysis of any author consists. And I was surprised to find that until that time, whenever I read, my imagination alone had been employed, and that my mind remained almost completely inert. The short lesson I then received from M. Mérot opened a world to my eyes. In dissecting the facts of Roman history as they are appreciated by that French author, I imagined I perceived the working of his mind, whilst before I had seen only his style and his spirited narrative. I had received a first lesson in criticism which I have never forgotten since.

That criticism, it is true, was limited to putting in order the ideas of the writer, such as they were, and did not touch on his reliability, or the soundness of his theories. Every one now knows that Vertot's *Révolutions Romaines* is merely a romance. But nobody at that time knew it, and M. Mérot probably had no idea of it. Nevertheless, he rendered me a great service in showing me that the way for a boy to receive instruction in reading consists in analyzing the ideas of the author, in, as it were, penetrating into his mind. Thus the mind of the reader himself is formed. At this time, I had already read a great deal, but without any effort at analysis, and I began to understand, for the first time, the importance of reading pen in hand. Besides the *History of the Bible*, which I had perused twice

when I was a child, I had in M. Michon's house gone through a good part of Fénelon's *Télémaque*, though I confess that I never could finish the book. I had found with some old grannies in the neighborhood of my father's house some queer books which I had devoured: *Tales* of Perraut and the *Fables* of Lafontaine. But what struck me most was the *Paradise Lost* of Milton and *Psyche and Cupid* of Apuleius, both translated into French. The old lady who let me have them thought they were real histories, and I greatly astonished her when I told her I did not believe it. I was first persuaded that it was true of the *Paradise Lost*, because the beginning agreed so well with the *History of the Bible*. But when I came to the wars of the angels in heaven, with artillery and cannon shots, I called it ridiculous stuff, to the great scandal of the old woman. As to the story of Psyche, I openly said that I could not understand it, which displeased the good simple granny, who thought it perfectly plain.

I had, at last, in M. Mérot, a very different instructor; and I saw that the most important thing for a boy is to develop his mind, and not to be satisfied with tickling the imagination and acquiring the habit of writing elegantly.

After I had finished that work of Vertot, M. Mérot said that it would be very useful to me to render an account to myself of the means a good writer takes for exciting the interest of his reader. "Vertot does it," M. Mérot said, "but St. Réal does it better still, in his *Conjuration de Venise*." This last book is simply the narrative of a supposed fact which no one now believes to be true; but all the circumstances are presented with so much order, lucidity, and attractiveness, that it

reads like a novel, and it is in fact not much truer than a romance. I was surprised how rapidly, under the direction of my kind instructor, I became acquainted with the most telling effects of literary art, and discovered new phases of a good writer's mind. It was not here mere logic and looking at the natural sequence of ideas and thoughts, as in the first case; it was the soaring of the intellect into the regions of eloquence and literary beauty. But the progress I was making did not assume immediately the proportions here suggested. It was very gradual.

The training I have described was, on the whole, similar to that received by all the students of the seminaries. At all events, the men brought up in these institutions showed that their education had not stunted them intellectually. After the year 1840, all or nearly all of the French bishops had received their education in the seminaries, and now they were quite competent, not only to fight with the world, and cope with it intellectually, but victory at last crowned their efforts, and once more secured for religion an honored position in France.

We have given a rapid account of our seminary instruction; we may throw further light upon it, by comparing it with the institutions of the State. The Collèges Royaux of the Bourbons, which had succeeded to the Lycées of Napoleon, were far ahead of the Petits Séminaires in material appointments. They received abundant aid in money from the State, and the professors enjoyed comfortable salaries. They continued the traditions of the old educational institutions of France, and on all public occasions displayed much of the stately show prevalent in the ancient universities.

They were rich in books and in all scientific apparatus. The students' libraries were well furnished, and the boys who wished to study had every opportunity to do so. But, except in Paris, few did so. In the French capital emulation was very active. The public examinations were a powerful incentive for young men who aspired to literary renown. Any student, in Paris, who carried many prizes at the end of his philosophy found every door open for a lucrative and honorable position. All except dunces, consequently, strove to succeed in those truly Olympian games. From them came that legion of authors, athletes in journalism, speakers in public assemblies, who made of the first half of this century so brilliant a period in French literature. The time was corrupt but very brilliant; and for a long time the clergy was out-classed, especially in literary art. Some few bishops, like de Quélen, were still admitted into the French Academy, but chiefly on account of their historic names, or their title of Peers of France, never, that I know of, because of their merits as speakers or writers. The intellectual superiority seemed to be secured to the lay element for some time to come.

In the provinces, however, the case was wholly different. The students in State colleges seemed to have no ambition, and few of them felt that strong desire to develop their minds, which distinguished many pupils of episcopal schools. The love of the Church and the wish to save souls spoke to the hearts of a great many young men in the Grand and Petit Séminaires, whilst in the Collèges Royaux, students had no other aim than to go through their classes, and be able to pass an examination for a degree of bachelor, a very easy feat at that time.

When I had almost completed my college studies in 1825, I was struck with this fact. Our commencement had taken place a few days before that of the Collège Royal. I went to the latter ceremony in order to compare it with our own, and I found much more merit at the latter. M. Sagory, it is true, our superior, had very winning manners and a fine appearance, whilst M. Demeure, the *proviseur* of the college, though not lacking therein, in my opinion, at least, was much less dignified. But the students in their blue uniforms, the vast and attractive audience, and, above all the presence of the civil and military authorities, seemed to show that the State greatly excelled the Church. But during the vacations that followed, my eyes were opened.

Among the students of rhetoric at the Collège Royal there was a young man who carried off almost all the prizes. He was evidently a great favorite and a bright student. He received his prizes from the hands of the vicar-general of the diocese, who represented the bishop. The young man, it was understood, meant to study for the priesthood, an unusual thing for a scholar of a State college. His name was Gaudin, and he was the son of a professor of mathematics.

The doctor had told my parents to send me to the seashore during vacation, and not to Ancenis or Oudon; and I went to La Bernerie again, in the latter part of August. What was my surprise to find when I arrived Gaudin and his father in a small but comfortable hotel quite near my own place of residence. He was as pleased to see me as I was to see him, for he had no friends in La Bernerie.

We soon became intimate friends and I had a good opportunity to become acquainted with the doings at

the Collège Royal. Gaudin was a fine fellow, a believing Catholic, and a young man of excellent morals. It was not the domestic atmosphere which had protected his innocence. His father thought only of mathematics, and entirely disbelieved anything which could not take the shape of an equation. His mother had been dead for a long time, and the only other member of his family was a sister. I became acquainted with her, and found to my surprise that she had rather masculine manners; the father wanted to make a mathematician of her, as his boy, he said, was good only for mumbling Latin and saying his prayers. He did not oppose the pious inclination of his son, which, however, he considered very foolish, but he turned all his attention to the girl, who, he thought, would become a distinguished disciple of Lagrange or Cauchy. The poor young woman had to submit to the will of her father, although much against her inclinations, and once, when I went to see Gaudin, in Nantes, I found the old man giving her a lesson in analytical geometry, with a switch in his hand that he applied unceremoniously in my presence on her shoulders because she missed the demonstration. I had been obliged by the old man, when I entered, to sit down and witness the whole affair.

There is no doubt that the grace of God alone had spoken to the heart of young Gaudin, and inspired him with the holy thought of entering the ministry. As this was also my intention we became intimate friends. But what was my astonishment to find out that I was ahead of Gaudin in training and information, though I was not the first in my class at the Petit Séminaire.

We both had brought books to the seashore, and it happened that they were of the same character, namely

French poetry. Gaudin had in his trunk, among other books, a splendid edition of the complete works of Racine, which he had received a few weeks before as one of his prizes. I had with me a selection of the best tragedies of Corneille, with some volumes of Laharpe's *Lycée*. When tired of talking we each took a volume of our favorite author, and went to sit on a rock, from which we could see the whole expanse of the ocean to the west. I soon became aware that Gaudin preferred Racine to Corneille, and I with Madame de Sévigné preferred Corneille. This led to many friendly discussions, always carried on in the best spirit, and it is not vain in me to say that I was oftener successful than the reverse, because the superiority of the noble author of *The Cid* and of *Cinna* is sufficiently apparent to unprejudiced eyes. I finally proved to Gaudin, that Racine could depict only one great subject—Love, while the genius of Corneille showed many other sides of the human soul.

My new friend was extremely weak in historical knowledge, and from what he said, I concluded that very few in the Collèges Royaux read history, except in very short compendiums for examination. It is unnecessary to say that I was his superior in Latin as well as in Greek. He had paid a great deal of attention to style in French, more than I had done; but I excelled him in what is called invention in rhetoric, and I could develop a subject, and present my thoughts in an interesting form, and in a lucid order, with much more facility than he could. He had not had as good an instructor as I had found in M. Mérot. There could be no doubt, consequently, that the training we received in the Petit Séminaire was superior to that of the State

schools. For the best of our boys, Kercado and Dupé, were greatly superior to me.

When young Gaudin went with me to the Grand Séminaire, to study philosophy and theology, he held a very mediocre rank. Nearly one-half of the class were above him in talent and success. He became, however, a most edifying priest, and did a great deal of good to many souls; but this was rather the effect of his tender piety than his education.

The reading in the Petits Séminaires was nearly limited to the writers of the seventeenth century. Very little was said of the writers of the eighteenth, and nothing at all of those of the nineteenth century. As there were great literary schools forming at that time which were destined to leave a deep impression on France, it was to be feared that the clergy would remain completely behind their time, and unable to influence it in any way. There was, for instance, the romantic school in literature which Victor Hugo was bringing into prominence; there was the eclectic school in philosophy, originated by Victor Cousin, and continued by other eminent writers, and there was the new historical school of Guizot and others.

With regard to the romantic school in literature, it had already convulsed the educated world in France, but we heard nothing of it in our ecclesiastical college. The classical taste of the previous century was rapidly disappearing before the immense talent of the new writers, and we continued to take as our models antiquated authors whom the romantics—the madcaps among them at least—abused and vilified. The school of Chateaubriand, which some of the young clergy studied and admired in secret, was totally different

from the true romantic; yet even that new imaginative style was thoroughly depreciated in the Petits Séminaires, even the *Génie du Christianisme* could not be seen in our hands. I remember to have heard M. Audrain, our professor of rhetoric, say that the influence of Chateaubriand on the French language would prove to be as hurtful as that of Seneca in Rome had been on the Latin. Not a phrase from the new writers was quoted except in order to ridicule it. Was not this a great mistake? Would not the priests after awhile in their sermons use a language which the nation would no longer understand, and which would make no impression?

It looked so to many, and in the course of time some young preachers, who thought they had more wisdom than those who had instructed them, adopted a style and mode of thought more in harmony with the prevailing taste; and several of them had to be restrained by their bishops. I do not speak here of such preachers as Lacordaire, or even Combalot, in whom the ardent faith, and the fire of true genius corrected the defects of a too exuberant fancy. But there were many others who would have rendered Christian eloquence contemptible, if they had been left free.

Fortunately the fad of romanticism in France did not last long enough to corrupt the public taste entirely, and there soon was a reaction towards good sense and reason, which is at this moment in full sway. For it is undeniable that of late years a correct style is prevalent in all branches of literature; the pulpit, particularly, has totally changed the character it had under Louis Philippe. It has seldom in any age produced so many eloquent speakers as at the present time, when the word of God is truly preached with majesty, and in

the most chaste style. How was this brought about? In my opinion it was the result of the apparently imprudent step taken by the teachers in all ecclesiastical schools to hold fast to the great writers of the seventeenth century. By obliging their young men to read constantly those masterpieces they developed their scholars' taste, as well as their minds, and enabled them to come to the front again as soon as the romantic fever was over.

In 1832 or 1835, almost whatever I read, or whatever I heard, in the churches or public assemblies grated on my feelings and I thought that the mind and imagination of all Frenchmen had taken a wrong direction, and that the evil was almost incurable. I heard at that time several sermons in Paris which made me almost despair of a return to reason and sense. Had anyone told me that in twenty years this would be changed I could not have believed it. Still the nervous irritation produced in me by the ridiculous nonsense then so prevalent, was shared by an immense number of young men who had been brought up, as I had been, in admiration of the golden age of literature in France. When I heard the popular preachers of the day, I could not but think of Bossuet and Bourdaloue. This was the experience of thousands who had been similarly trained. The result was that many young preachers soon brought back the former taste, only enlivened by greater picturesqueness. Thus the education given in the Petits Séminaires had not been barren of result, but, on the contrary, it had powerfully contributed to produce a great revolution in French literature.

CHAPTER VI

A FEW WORDS ON THE GRANDS SÉMINAIRES

After my rhetoric I went directly to the Grand Séminaire of Nantes to study philosophy and found myself at once in a more congenial atmosphere. The philosophical studies in the seminary of Nantes were then peculiar, owing to the professor, who was no other than M. Felix Fournier, who recently died bishop of that city. (This is written in 1879.) He was not a Sulpician, though the whole house was under the care of M. Olier's Congregation. Being already known as an admirer and follower of some recent theories in philosophy, such as those of Lamennais, he had solemnly promised not to teach the skeptical views of this author with regard to the individual reason of man, and to confine his traditionalism to the usual doctrine of the schools on that subject. I have always believed that, in making this promise, M. Fournier did not surrender any of his private convictions, for, although he was a follower of Lamennais, he saw the danger of denying that individual reason can reach truth. Be this as it may, he was faithful to the programme he had accepted. This left him free to reject the theories of other writers, who, until that time, had been followed in many of the French episcopal institutions, such as Descartes' system of methodical doubt. Thus, although the *Philosophia*

Lugdunensis had been placed in our hands as a text-book, M. Fournier, seldom, if ever, referred to it except to criticise it; and he did it well. He had, in fact, a great contempt for everything connected with Jansenism and Gallicanism, with which the common doctrine was tainted. The authors he followed in his lessons were (besides Lamennais), de Bonald, de Maistre, Bossuet, and Fénelon. The reader must remember that Lamennais at that time had suffered no condemnation, and he had so far rendered immense services to religion.

It is manifest from all this that we were favored in Nantes more than in most other seminaries. What might be said of the antiquated and incomplete, if not false philosophy studied in France by candidates for the priesthood was not applicable to us. It was the beginning of a new life which was gradually infused in other Grands Séminaires, and became in course of time productive of immense good. It finally resulted in the noble scholastic system, now in full vigor under the powerful impulse of Leo XIII.

Although I then witnessed only the feeble beginnings, I can say that it was already something to enjoy with pleasure, since it was the well-deserved burial of a dead system, and the hopeful resurrection of an old giant, who had remained asleep several centuries, and though his name was scarcely pronounced, was finally waking up. Our professor was very young indeed, being scarcely twenty-two years old, and he had received only subdeaconship; but he was full of vigor, and if the field of his metaphysics was not as extensive as might be desired, it was at least solid ground on which the feet could stand, and the eye could command a larger

horizon. The course of evidences of religion which we went through during early summer was refreshing to our faith, and gave us a great idea of philosophy, since we were called upon to discuss the noble themes of the existence and attributes of God, the destiny of man, and the certainty of revelation. These were broad foundations for our future theology; both together would stand firm, whilst the brilliant kaleidoscope of the eclecticism of the State lectures would soon end in dissolving views.

No one, it is true, could even suspect at that time the solidity and massiveness of the superstructure which would be raised on the principles that began to be adopted. The numerous works which have been published during the last twenty years by Catholic writers of great eminence on all philosophical questions were not even dreamt of. Still there was already hope in the air and the future assumed a brilliant hue, on leaving behind the dark and cold philosophical sky which had been for so long a time the only prospect in view.

M. Fournier was but one among a number of young clergymen who were not satisfied with the previous teaching of philosophy. There was certainly hesitation in many of them and they were rather feeling their way in new roads which were still dim rather than full of sunlight. Some of them may have blundered, l'abbé Bautain in particular, but this did not surprise us. But their intentions were excellent and their open advocacy of the rights of the Holy See in philosophical as well as in theological questions, was in direct opposition to the views of the old French schools. Gallicanism as well as Cartesianism were openly attacked by all of them, and this perhaps was the main reason

why bishops did not trust them. For it was a fact to be deplored that too often bishops had very wrong notions on what is now formally condemned and, with the exception of a very few French bishops, were openly Gallicans.

This became a stumbling block for Lamennais in attacking bishops; he in fact attacked authority which he pretended to uphold, even in philosophy, and his pride, increasing with his violent controversies on all subjects, led him at last to despise the highest authority on earth, hence his fall. But this could not happen to his followers, owing to their candor and strong faith, and it is a consoling fact that not a single one of them shared in his apostasy, and all of them at last turned their backs on the master they had almost worshipped

It is well known how many of them became powerful instruments of God for the regeneration of France, and it is sufficient to mention here the names of Lacordaire, Gerbet, and Rohrbacker, some of whom had belonged to the Community of La Chenaie. Guéranger, Fournier, and many others, who had never that I know of been disciples of Lamennais, were nevertheless proud at that time of having embraced many of his opinions, and became shining lights in the Church of Christ, which they ardently loved and constantly served with real enthusiasm.

Whilst we were thus in our first year of philosophy, laying the foundations of a solid intellectual life, another great and good man, living at Nantes, was preparing for us, in secret, a new way of enriching our minds. This was M. l'abbé de Courson, then vicar-general of the diocese, and a Sulpician. The project which he was maturing, unknown almost to everybody, was that of

giving us a new chance to become useful and efficient ministers of God by extending the circle of our studies.

It is a strange fact, which can scarcely be explained, that since the re-establishment of religion in France by the Concordat between Pius VII and Napoleon, the study of mathematics, physics, chemistry and the natural sciences had never even been touched in its most simple elements, within the precincts of the Grands Séminaires, except perhaps that of Paris. During our collegiate education, we dabbled a little in arithmetic, geometry and algebra; but nothing more could be expected in the usual curriculum. The whole field of exact and natural sciences was for us unknown ground. Still it was an age when these branches of study extensively flourished in France. Napoleon, who attached much importance to them, had never expressed, as far as I know, the wish that the priests of his empire should be instructed in the most elementary branches of those sciences, and had never helped the bishops to this end.

M. de Courson was a man of some means. He wished to consecrate these to the founding of a new institution for the benefit of the diocesan clergy, in the form of a second year of philosophy entirely devoted to mathematics, physics, and chemistry. In all former textbooks destined for clerical candidates, an entire volume contained at least the most important elements of natural science. This had entirely disappeared in the new editions of those old authors, and had not been replaced by a general view at least of the modern discoveries in that interesting field. The generation of clergymen who had grown up in France from the time of the Concordat (1802) down to the year of grace

1826 knew absolutely nothing of the principles and laws which govern the material world. A very few had read books which could give them some crude notions on the subject. The great majority could not speak intelligently with any educated man of the simplest physical phenomena which happened every day in nature. How could they expect to be influential in such a country as France then was? This M. de Courson felt acutely, and he made up his mind to remedy the evil at least in the diocese of Nantes.

He therefore purchased a large piece of ground almost contiguous to the Grand Séminaire, and he built on it a comfortable and roomy house which could accommodate at least eighty young men. This was called the Séminaire de Philosophie, whose course would last two years. It was settled that only those young men who had been good students the first year should enjoy the advantage of the second. I was chosen among the first who were to profit by this privilege.

The gentleman who put almost his entire fortune into this endowment belonged to one of the best families of Brittany. He was the only child of his father, and had renounced great worldly advantages to devote himself to the service of the Church, which was at that time reviled and persecuted and despised in France He had received his first education in the Petit Séminaire with many other sons of noblemen, and did not then appear called to the profession which he afterwards embraced. But during his legal studies at Paris, which immediately followed his collegiate course in Nantes, he felt the deepest aversion for the corruption of a world which he despised, and instead of taking his degree in

law, he entered the seminary of St. Sulpice, without even informing his father of his resolution. With some difficulty he obtained a consent which carried with it the extinction of his family, and to preclude the possibility of honors even in the Church, he went directly to bury himself in the solitude of Issy, and became as he wished, only an obscure Sulpician.

He had just been ordained priest when M. Micolon de Guerines was made Bishop of Nantes, after the death of D'Andigné. The new prelate, becoming acquainted with all these facts, previous to his departure from Paris, easily obtained from the Superior General of the Sulpician Congregation M. de Courson's transfer to Nantes as Director of the seminary.

I still vividly remember the surprise created among many students of theology who had known M. de Courson in the Petit Séminaire as a dashing young fellow (and rather a worldly than a pious one) when they saw him coming back not only a priest, but a Sulpician, invested with the character of vicar-general by the new bishop. And some of them seemed to dread that the man who was to rule the diocese under the bishop would be rather a supercilious dignitary than a father and friend to the clergy. They were soon undeceived, however, and their apprehensions were quieted, by the first appearance of M. de Courson in their midst.

It happened that among his former fellow students at the college there had been a boy whose name was Arthuis, whom he had often used as his fag, and who could not but remember the rough treatment he had received from his tyrant. Arthuis (who, by-the-bye, might have been one of the descendants of the cele-

brated Arthuis, the friend of Madame de Sévigné), no more studied for the church at the Petit Séminaire than young de Courson himself. But after going through law in Paris, and even practising as a lawyer in Nantes for a few years, he also became tired of the world and finally entered the Grand Séminaire to study theology. He was engaged in that occupation when M. de Courson arrived, to be introduced to the students.

This ceremony took place in the *salle des exercises* (as the common room is called among the Sulpicians), and the reader may imagine the awkward position of both Arthuis and de Courson, when they found themselves face to face after nearly ten years of separation. M. de Courson, at least, had no suspicion that he would meet his former fag in such circumstances, and in the midst of so large a company. There was, however, no sign of surprise on his part, but as soon as he perceived Arthuis he went straight to him, embraced him most affectionately, and merely said that he hoped that his former conduct was by this time forgotten, as they both were now men, working together for the service of God and of His Church.

The story of this meeting rapidly spread throughout the diocese, and all immediately saw that the new vicar-general was very different from the lively young student they had formerly known. The more they became acquainted with him the more they esteemed him, and at last they felt the most profound and sincere veneration for him. What was most striking in his person was not so much his invariable humility and forgetfulness of self, as his simplicity of manners and facility of intercourse. It was almost impossible to ruffle his equanimity of temper, and when he was

applied to for any favor, he never refused when it was possible to grant it. In all his decisions there was such a fairness and strict attention paid to the claims of justice that a refusal from his lips could never offend, and I have never heard, as far as I remember, any of his subordinates complain of him, as they occasionally did of some of his confrères in the seminary. I heard that he repeatedly declined bishoprics offered him by the government, and I would have been surprised to hear that he had acted differently. He could not, however, decline his unanimous election to be Superior General of the Congregation of St. Sulpice, in which office he died. I have lately learned with great pleasure that a competent writer is preparing his biography at the present time.

But M. de Courson's new house was not yet organized. The day it was opened in October, 1826, is still fresh in my memory. Plasterers and carpenters were at work, and the odor, always pleasant to me, of new wood and varnish, filled the corridors and spread even to the first walks of the large and quiet garden which was to be our playground. The surroundings seemed to me exactly like those of the delightful dwelling of M. Michon at St. Jacques'.

M. de Courson could not find among the whole clergy in Nantes any professor of the exact and natural sciences, and he engaged laymen for this purpose. M. Hérisson, a former officer in the French Navy, who taught the elementary mathematics at the Petit Séminaire, was naturally selected to continue his course, and M. Le Boyer, the professor of physics and chemistry in the Collège Royal, was to be our teacher in those studies. A small scientific library, and a sufficient

collection of instruments had been purchased for our use.

The only priests in the house besides the superior were the professor of philosophy and the procurator or treasurer; however, if there was any treasure, it certainly did not come from the students, because few students paid even for their board, and the gross revenue of the house came from a source which we all knew, but of which we never dared to speak, as this would have highly displeased the head of the seminary. Oh! the happy days we spent with him in this little corner of the world!

M. Hérisson was delighted to see us again, and evidently took great pride in pushing us along, making us repeat what we had previously seen, and introducing us into the new fields of trigonometry and analytical geometry. He was a good man, an excellent Christian, and if he was not a mathematician to be compared to Cauchy or Poisson, he was sure of what he taught, and never failed to remove all our doubts, when he called us to the blackboard. There is no need of mentioning that he never complained as formerly, of our want of attention, for, thank God, there was not a single one among us ungrateful for what was done in our behalf. He often said that his class could favorably compare with any of the State schools, and that we would be able to hold our own in the world.

M. Le Boyer, who had a great reputation in Nantes as a mathematician and physicist, did not feel, at first, the same familiarity with us as his excellent lay-confrère He had never before taught a class of clerical pupils, and as he was a man imbued with modern notions it must have at first grated on his feelings to

direct the studies of so many young abbés, who showed they were not lacking in talent. Occasionally they stopped him in the midst of a demonstration to beg of him to explain what appeared obscure, and this never happened with M. Hérisson. For this latter gentleman was always remarkable for his lucidity. M. Le Boyer' with all his reputation, was far less exact. He had been too long accustomed to the heedlessness of his collegians, who never interrupted him, because they did not feel any interest in their studies. After a while there was a great change in M. Le Boyer's manner. He had supposed that he knew his subject matter well enough to come without preparation. He was greatly surprised to hear from us objections which had never come to his mind. He had the good sense, however, not to attribute it to our hatred of science, as some other scientists might have done, but to infer that we were not dunces, and that we were men who treated science with proper respect.

He now studied his subject before he came to class, and the habit we had already acquired of asking him questions enabled us to draw from him still more light, even when he thought he had been exact. This pleased him mightily, for he was not of a sour temper. He began to consider his new class as a kind of academy, where scientific questions were treated rationally and sensibly, at the same time that the rules of strict politeness were always observed.

M. Le Boyer was so delighted with us that he spoke of it to some of his friends and admirers in Nantes, and people who had laughed when they heard that seminarians were going to turn mathematicians and physicists were quite impressed when M. Le Boyer announced

that, of the two classes taught by him, the one at the Collège Royal was inferior to that of the seminary. Here the reader again sees one of the steps by which the Church in France began to rise in public estimation, and regain something of her former influence.

Our text-book in physics was that of Fischer, a German professor of renown at that time, and in mathematics we followed Bourdon, Lacroix, and other French authors. In chemistry we went only through the study of the chief elementary bodies, but we were able, at least, at the end of the year, to give a startling exhibition of what would be now very ordinary experiments. Several professors of the Collège Royal, gentlemen from the city and a couple of old priests, doctors of the former Sorbonne, witnessed our first efforts and expressed satisfaction with what they had seen. At least a successful beginning had been made, and I have no doubt that at this moment our successors in Nantes are respected in the city for their progress in natural science.

But the spiritual training of the seminarians did even more to secure for the French clergy the influence they have now than their progress in science. Some excellent persons think that the strict separation from the outside world insisted upon in all the ecclesiastical seminaries would increase the estrangement, already so marked, between the clergy and men of the world. But the result was the reverse. All who were not animated by blind hatred of religion could not but admire the life of abnegation and self-restraint led by so great a number of young men who had no other object in view than to serve God and their neighbor. The preparation for the priesthood lasted altogether five

or six years after the completion of their collegiate studies.

That life was far from unpleasant in some respects, but it was a severe trial because of the complete separation of the seminarians from the outside world. In some ways it was not only tolerable, but delightful, at least to me; it was more than ascetic and might be called monkish. We had a sufficiently good and abundant table, not daintily, but neatly, served. A pleasant private room, comfortably warm in winter, with sunshine, and the sight of the stars at night. Agreeable walks for recreation, either in a large yard planted with linden trees where the sparrows chirped early in the morning, or if you preferred rest, a seat in a blooming garden full of green vegetables, and surrounded with fruit trees of every description. There was nothing to offend the senses, but rather everything to please them. We were told that what God has made can be enjoyed within the limits of His commandments. In order to enjoy nature better still, to keep up the health of the body and enable us to bear study without injury to our frame, we spent a full day every week in a delightful villa containing more than sixty acres of ground. There were there gardens and groves and meadows and fields and vineyards and long avenues of the splendid elms of the country, and likewise reading rooms and billiard rooms for those who were tired of walking. This place was called La Barberie. I do not know why it had such an ugly name.

But what I preferred to these attractions was the society of my comrades. There was always urbanity in our intercourse, and if occasionally some of us grew

warm in discussions, either philosophical or theological, they always ended amicably, and in general the one who had fared the worse in argument joined with his opponent in a hearty laugh. I saw few young men who appeared sour from disappointment. Our discussions were always confined to the matter of our studies, since no tidings ever reached us from the outside world, either of politics, or of common life among worldings. No newspapers, no reviews, no trashy literature of any sort, were ever allowed to circulate within the house. I never heard of bitter feelings existing between fellow students. You might have warm friends if you chose, and I had some very dear ones, but no one could have an enemy within those walls. Deep religious feeling was the source of all this happiness.

While conditions inside of the seminary were thus almost ideal, the seminarians were kept in total seclusion from the world, like Carthusian or Cistercian monks, except during the three months of vacation, when they were allowed to be with their families.. Friends and relatives, it is true, might be seen in the parlor during the recreation at noon, and letters might be written and received. But this was checked as much as possible. Those whose parents lived in the city—these were very few—were allowed to go out on New Year's day, but at no other time except for very urgent reasons, such as serious sickness of a near relative. I have known many seminarians who, during the five years of their philosophy and theology, never left the house, except on play days to go to the country seat, and in July for vacation. Those whose families lived at a distance from Nantes rarely received any visitors during their residence at the seminary. This never struck

us as strange, because it was the rule in all seminaries. Still it was a rule unknown before the Revolution. The Fathers of the Council of Trent warmly recommended to all bishops the foundation of seminaries in their dioceses, but they had not in mind a life of seclusion for the students. All St. Vincent de Paul obtained from his young seminarians in Paris was that they came to St. Lazare, to go through the exercises of a retreat before their ordination. The free and easy life of young men in universities continued in many places in France to be the usual life of seminarians, and it is only since the time of the French Revolution that the candidates for the priesthood have been strictly separated from the world. By this measure the bishops sought to preserve the young men who were to be priests and levites from the corruption of the world, and from dangerous associations. But a great deal more was obtained through it than had been intended, and through a kind Providence the whole French nation was to profit by it.

But the secluded life of the seminarians did not lead them to forget the world entirely. It was well suited to interest them in the salvation of others. On account of their very solitude there was no other thought so steadily present to their minds, during the long years of their probation and preparation, than the thought that they were getting ready to work for the salvation of others. For this they had entered the seminary, for this they were anxiously looking forward to their future ordination. And the exercises they went through daily and hourly were not, as many believe, of such a nature as to make of them simpletons and dullards. They were not thereby fitted only for the company of a

few devotees and timorous women. There was food for their minds in everything they did and studied. Their studies, their recitations in class, their conversations, even in moments of relaxation, developed their mental faculties, to which their meditations, self-examinations, prayers and ascetic practices filled their hearts with tender feelings of piety and enabled them to speak with unction, and to act upon the hearts of others.

It is not surprising, therefore, that among the young men who from 1815 to 1840 embraced the clerical state, many were able to impress men previously indifferent to religion, and some of them filled France with their eloquence. There is no need of naming them. From them came many bishops who were men of great ability, great virtue and most winning ways, providentially chosen to reform dioceses, to build new churches and to restore to France its Christian character. From the beginning of the reign of Louis Philippe, nearly all bishops were selected from among the men who had received the ascetic and monastic training of the Grands Séminaires, and belonged to respectable but poor families.

I have said nothing so far of the religious exercises which strongly contributed to give the French clergy its character. A meditation in the morning (the subject of which had been read the evening before), examination of conscience at noon and general examination of conscience at night, confession and reception of the Holy Eucharist at least once a week, frequent instructions from the superior and personal devotions in the chapel, chiefly trained the heart, and did more to make the young men efficient priests, than the study and discussion of theological and philosophical subjects

alone could have done. The piety which was encouraged by the seminary directors was solid and devoid of exaggeration. Jansenism, which had lasted in France nearly a century and a half, was dead.

The scandals given during the French Revolution by nearly all the Jansenistic priests and monks had stamped that dogmatic and moral heresy with disgrace. The Sulpicians, who educated me, have always been opposed to it even in the worst times of the eighteenth century, and their seminaries, even then I am sure, were free from any taint, except that of a mild form of Gallicanism. But after all they directed only eighteen of the seminaries of France; the others were mainly under the charge of the secular priests, selected by the bishops for that purpose. I do not think that Jansenism prevailed in a single Sulpician seminary. The moral theology that was taught there was severe, and far too harsh for weak Christians such as Frenchmen then were. But if the priests trained by the Sulpicians were often imprudent as spiritual directors, and unduly stern to sinners even when they were truly repentant, the Grands Séminaires were free from this fault. The young men were no doubt trained spiritually with great care and also with great kindness and gentleness. They were thus formed to bring about a mighty change in the methods of spiritual direction through the Sacrament of Penance. When they came to exercise the ministry they naturally treated their penitents as they had themselves been dealt with during their training for the priesthood.

Meanwhile the yoke laid upon us in the seminary, instead of being too heavy, was a most pleasant burden which rendered our life sweet and attractive. What

a pleasure it was to sing the praises of the Lord on Sundays and festivals in our plain but neat and sunlit chapel! We all were destined from our youth to minister at the Holy Altar, consecrating to God the first fruits of our life with the ardent desire of devoting to Him the full energies of manhood when it should come. All in turn taking part in the quiet ceremonies of the holy place, we prepared for the future functions of an eternal priesthood. On great festivals, most of the day was spent in church. How sweet was Christmas night! How glorious Easter Day! There was no one to disturb our devotions; no crowd of rough people; no staring of cynical eyes; no jarring elements. It was the faithful reproduction of the Church at Jerusalem; *Cor unum et anima una.*

Seminarians were seldom sent to city churches. I think a few went to the cathedral at Christmas and Easter. During the whole period of my probation, I was never sent thither except for ordination; and I blessed God that it was so; that the big Gothic church of St. Pierre, the cathedral of Nantes, was considered by our directors too noisy and boisterous a place to be pleasant and edifying to us. So far was seclusion carried in the seminary, and perhaps many will think it was going too far. Of course, we expected when we became priests not only to witness still stranger scenes in our appointed places of ministry, but even to preside at them and direct, as well as we could, the simple and rude people in the spirit of simple but quiet piety. Our instructors thought that the best way to prepare us for that office was to have the advantage of a long training in the heartfelt emotions of deep silence and profound adoration. I am sure they were right.

I remember that my present opinion of the influence the French clergy had on my countrymen agrees in substance with the views I had in 1835 before I left Europe. I spent half a month in Florence on my way to Rome. I went several times to the magnificent Duomo to assist at the canons' office, and became acquainted with one of them, Signor Bigeschi, an excellent man who had been ten years a missionary in Louisiana. On one occasion he took me to dine at the house of the parish priest of the church where I said my Mass every day. This gentleman was a venerable old priest, who was at that time directing the annual retreat of the Florentine seminarians. Both gentlemen pressed me to give them a full description of the social and religious state of France. I could not but draw the picture in dark colors. After I had finished, the venerable *parroco* was the first to speak.

"What hope is there for France? I knew that the situation was far from promising, but I did not suspect that conditions were so discouraging. What will become of poor France?"

"There is hope yet," I replied, "because the clergy are excellent. Their training is different from that of your clergy, and I think that in that regard at least we are better off than you. I perceive that you send your seminarians every day to the canons' office. In France it is not done, even on great festival days. I remark a great levity in the way the young men perform their duty here. We would never allow this."

"You are right," said the excellent parish priest, "in thinking that there is hope for a nation when the clergy are irreproachable and well trained."

CHAPTER VII

REVOLUTION OF 1830—LOUIS PHILIPPE'S REIGN—INTERFERENCE OF THE FRENCH CLERGY IN POLITICS AT THE END OF THE RESTORATION

Among the charges brought against the Bourbon government by its enemies the most frequent was the influence allowed to bishops and priests in political matters. The most serious complaint, no doubt, was the violation of the Charter often ascribed to the government, and this was repeated again and again in the manifestoes of the Liberal party. For this the people openly fought in the streets, and after their victory the Charter was again proclaimed with some new clauses intended to prevent a repetition of its infraction by the King. But next to the violation of the Charter, one of the chief complaints in the popular mind was that Charles X went to confession, consequently humbled himself before priests, took their advice in carrying out his political measures, surrounded himself with troops of them in the Tuileries and distributed public offices according to their dictation or at least advice. Was there any truth in all those surmises and accusations? And did the clergy under Louis Philippe, and later, continue their machinations and meddle with public affairs without appearing to do so, as they were accused of doing?

Louis Philippe

Under Charles X a few dignitaries of the higher clergy frequently went to court. They were most of them noblemen of high lineage, and were attached to some of the traditions of the old régime, under which several of them had lived. The open union of Church and State, recognized by the Charter, itself allowed them to claim some influence in politics, and no one could justly complain that they occasionally used that influence. They were French citizens; they not only had a right to an opinion on the affairs of their country, but it was their duty to act upon their opinion and make it prevail if they could by legal and constitutional means. All this is well understood in this country. No American would complain (if there were here, as in England, a union of Church and State) that Episcopalian, and even Catholic or other bishops, should be elected to the American Senate, allowed to speak on State matters, and should endeavor to pass bills favorable to the State religion. This would be a consequence of the Constitution of the country, and no man would find fault with it.

In France under the Bourbons, whilst the Charter declared that the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church was the State religion, the French clergy, even those of the highest rank, took good care not to make any offensive claims for their Church. No ecclesiastic of any degree ever interfered in the elections; he neither presented himself as a candidate for the votes of his fellow citizens, nor openly advised the people to vote for his friends. Allusion was never made to political matters in the pulpit, and no churchmen discussed them in pamphlets or periodicals. The interference in politics on the part of the clergy was limited

to the fact that a few bishops had seats in the Chamber of Peers, that generally one of them was made Minister of Public Worship, and that, on a few occasions, it was known that some men had been appointed to public offices, possibly because they openly practised their religion. This surmise, though never proved, was nevertheless asserted by all the organs of the Liberal party and became in fact one of the chief causes of the fall of Charles X.

Let us see how the Catholic Church exercised her influence in France. The law declared that the ceremonies of the Catholic religion should be public. Consequently not only were the churches open from morning till night, and the solemn offices of Sunday and festivals celebrated with all the pomp that the well-known poverty of the Church allowed, but acts of worship were performed in the public thoroughfares. Thus the Holy Eucharist was carried to the sick with lights, and bell and canopy; the dead were taken to their last resting place with funeral chant led by priests and choristers; the processions of St. Mark's day and of Rogations went solemnly around the parishes in cities as well as through the blooming fields in the rural districts; the procession of Corpus Christi in particular, displayed, in the open streets and squares, all the grandeur and solemnity of the Catholic ritual.

Nothing of this could be connected with politics. But if the clergy had had any influence in political matters, the State would have seen to it that these ceremonies should be treated with proper respect. It was even its duty to do so, because the law required it. The State, however, did not enforce it. It would, no doubt, have interfered if there had been danger of a

riot and perhaps bloodshed. But the police did not prevent irreverence or insult. In the streets of Nantes I have seen young men, when the Blessed Sacrament was taken to the dying, cross the streets, and pass just in front of the priest, who held the ciborium in his hand, sneering at him vulgarly. They were neither arrested nor prosecuted. Funeral ceremonies, it is true, were never disturbed, owing to a feeling of respect for the dead rather than to religious feeling. During the celebration of Corpus Christi, in the fashionable quarters of the city, the windows and blinds were kept closed, and the street was left undecorated and unswept. When the Benediction was given from a Repository in the streets, and the crowd was piously kneeling and praying, young fools with their hats on stood up to show their disrespect. Similar insults frequently interfered with the good order of other processions, such as those on Rogation Days. The clergy submitted without protest to these exhibitions of vulgarity and intolerance. They would surely not have done so had they exercised the political influence ascribed to them.

The clergy were Royalists to the core, and more firmly attached to the Bourbon dynasty than any other class in France. After the terrible convulsion of the Revolution, after the collapse of the exhaustive glories of Napoleon's reign, the Bourbons had been welcomed back with acclamation. Even after their flight to Belgium, in 1815, before Waterloo, the nation showed a decided determination to keep them on the throne, by sending to the Chamber of Deputies a powerful majority of ardent Royalists, who obtained for that assembly the name of *la Chambre Introuvable*. The monarchical form of government was evidently estab-

lished and vested in the Bourbon dynasty, with the consent or rather in accordance with the wishes of the French nation. To be a Royalist and a Bourbonist, therefore, was to be truly a nationalist, a friend and supporter of the legitimate constitution of the country. On the contrary, to desire the overthrow of the Bourbons was to belong not to a party, but to a faction. It was a citizen's duty to oppose that faction by legitimate means. The clergy in adhering to the Bourbons were not partisans, therefore, engaged in politics, but they fulfilled the chief duty of all citizens, which consists in being faithful to the constituted government.

The first priest with whom I became acquainted was M. Michon, in his pleasant house at St. Jacques'. Although the son of a Vendean and although he had himself suffered in the Vendean wars, we heard no politics at table. The parents of his scholars belonged to various parties and he knew it. This alone shows that his house was not a place for political intrigue. His confrères often came to see him and dined with us. I have never heard them denounce the Liberals and they never spoke excitedly about politics. This was under Louis XVIII. Priests, strictly excluded from politics under Napoleon, abstained from political activity under Louis XVIII when the various governments did not seek the support of the clergy. Political machinery was in the hands of laymen. From the ultra Royalists under the leadership of La Bourdonnaye, the moderate Bourbonists with De Serre and Decazes, to the *Centre Gauche*, with Royer Collard and his fellow doctrinaires, and finally to the factious plotters of the Left under the guidance of Manuel, Benjamin Constant and La Fayette, all parties avoided identification with the clergy.

At college all the professors of the Petit Séminaire were Royalists and never disguised their sentiments. The outcry raised against the priests that they were traitors to the Charter, which they wished to subvert, and consequently disloyal to the Constitution of France, was a false accusation for which I could never discover the reason. Many of the professors and officials at the college, no doubt, disapproved some of the provisions of that instrument. I can bear testimony that I never heard any of our teachers speak against it, though if a student had cried *Vive la Charte* on the college ground he would undoubtedly have been punished.

It was only when I became a young man, put on the cassock, received the tonsure, and began my studies in theology that I heard priests discuss politics. I was suddenly thrown among them, not only in the Grand Séminaire, but likewise in my native parish in Nantes, in the other parishes of the city, and in the villages and towns of the neighborhood during vacations. But after Charles X began his reign, towards 1825 or 1826, I became aware that clergymen more openly expressed their political opinions, at least in the part of France where I lived. I have always attributed this to several causes.

The first was the general expectation which had prevailed some time before the death of Louis XVIII, that when Charles X would assume the reins of government the direction of politics would pass into new hands. It was known that the two brothers who were at the head of the House of Bourbon differed considerably in their views. Louis XVIII believed that the policy of the *Centre Droit*, as it was called, that is of De Serre, Decazes, and their friends, corresponded better to the

wishes of the nation in general than any other. Hence his policy leaned to liberalism. Charles X was inclined to adopt the programme of the Pure Right without, however, favoring the Ultras. Everybody, including the clergy, was on tiptoe.

In the second place the priests began to read political literature more generally than before. Only the old men among them continued to be satisfied with the *Quotidienne* and *Gazette de France*. Young clergymen seemed disposed to take an active part in the affairs of their country. The eloquent voice of Lamennais, still ardent champion of the Church, had a powerful influence on them; and although the great Breton writer had not yet begun his erratic political career, and had confined himself to writing on strictly philosophical and religious questions, still he was evidently preparing for some new departure which everybody looked for. He had already gathered around his person a number of talented young men and his community of La Chenaie was the cynosure of all clergymen's eyes, some regarding it with suspicion, others with admiration.

It is noteworthy that Lamennais' movement was partly directed against Gallicanism, which was connected with royalty and had the effect of directing the clergy's attention towards politics. This furnished them with a second reason to devote some of their attention to political questions.

Lastly, the violent scenes in the Parliament which manifested the dangerous condition of the Bourbou dynasty filled Frenchmen, whether clerical or not, with fear and trembling. It would have been no crime for the clergy to give up their inaction and to aid in

saving the country from disorder and revolution. All they did was to speak of it, discuss the situation, and express their hopes and fears. For this they were accused of being violent political partisans.

All in the seminary knew that there was agitation everywhere. Our Sulpician directors now and then made remarks which they no doubt regretted afterwards, but which our curiosity welcomed. The letters which we received, and the visits from relatives and friends from the city, brought us further light. But it was especially during vacation that we witnessed the boiling of the political caldron.

In France more than in any other country, perhaps, a young student of theology is welcome in every parish priest's house. The most slender acquaintance entitles a young man with a cassock on his back to share the hospitality of every *curé* of the diocese. For my part, after I had spent two or three weeks in my parents' house, I began a round of visits in the neighborhood of the city. Le Pelerin, Aigrefeuilles, Reze, Chapelle-sur-Mer, Nort, Orvault, Ligne, etc., offered me in turn pleasant and safe quarters for a week or so; because I knew that the good *curé* and his *vicaire* were always pleased to have me with them. When at Nantes I dined nearly as often in a rectory as at home. For nearly all the city *curés* were my friends, and I was always welcome to a place at table when I went there about noon.

I therefore knew what were the opinions, and the subjects of conversation of those good men, whom I have ever since remembered with affection for their kind disposition towards me. That they spoke a great deal about politics at that time is certain. But that they were not active politicians is equally certain. No

doubt they spoke with their lay friends as freely as with me and influenced them. But so far as I know they never converted any Liberal nor did they try to do so, because they never spoke to the Liberals. This is the chief fault that I found with them. For I believe had they taken a more active part in politics they might have done a great deal of good to France. I do not here speak of political intrigue, nor of their turning politicians. It would not have been proper for them, for instance, to be the Government's agents, and to receive from it money to distribute among the electors. They never were accused of this, and no one thought it possible, they less than anyone else. But they might have used their tongues with profit, and nobody could have prevented them. They did not do it enough, and still they were blamed for meddling with politics, when every scribbler and *commis voyageur*, though men far less intelligent, loudly preached revolution and upturned the dynasty.

What could they have done? In the first place they should have cultivated a more active intercourse with their countrymen. But they never came in contact with French Liberals. Immediately after Napoleon's fall they wished to have nothing to do with them. M. Michon, we have seen, received their children into his house, frequently talked with them, and occasionally entertained them at dinner. I am sure that many other clergymen in France did the same. Why is it that as early as 1825 this was no longer the case? Some might attribute it to the separation from the world imposed on young seminarians. But scarcely one generation of new seminarians had been raised to the priesthood at that time.

The total estrangement between the clergy and the Liberals must have been due to the conviction that the two parties could not become friendly, as they were radically opposed to each other. Hence they ceased to have any mutual intercourse, and they were as far separated as if they had lived a thousand miles apart. This condition of things continues to this day, and on account of it scarcely any Liberal or Republican is a Catholic. No other nation exhibits the same phenomenon. Neither in Spain, nor in Italy, nor in Germany have the Catholic clergy become entirely estranged from the bulk of the nation. In those countries the men holding new ideas are, it is true, generally shy of the priest's cassock or the monk's cowl; yet they seldom decline to join in conversation with them, and the priests and monks gladly hold intercourse with their countrymen. The intercourse benefits all and helps along a mutual understanding.

In France at the time of which we speak very different conditions existed. There were still comparatively few priests in the country and no monks nor friars. Whenever a clergyman appeared in a public place, in a diligence, on a steamer, in the parlors of a hotel, an ominous silence prevailed. When, however, a conversation started between the laymen present, it was directed at the priest, though not addressed to him. Soon a sharp word would be said to which he could not help but answer, and a controversy was the consequence, more replete with sarcasm than with reason. This was a common occurrence in France between 1820 and 1830. It may be said that the clergymen were not responsible for this state of things, and that it was not their fault if they were thus ostracized.

But I think that this is only partly true. The priests might often have commenced a conversation themselves. Some few did this with good results.

Unfortunately they gave up the attempt to place themselves in pleasant relations with their countrymen too soon. Had they persevered, they might perhaps have reconciled the two parties existing among their fellow countrymen. Many of the more moderate Liberals might certainly have been reached in this way. If there were comparatively few of these in France, they were scattered in such a way as to be most useful. In large cities, they always formed a respectable body. Many, even among those indifferent to religion, were still respected. In small towns and villages there were generally a few, almost always at least one, and these were known to all the inhabitants. Their respectability sufficed to give them political influence. Few thought of using their influence. They supposed it was useless, but were probably mistaken. This appeared after the downfall of Louis Philippe, when the part which the French clergy took in the country's politics became of such a beneficial character.

When the royal *ordonnance*, or edict, was published curtailing the liberty of the press and restricting the franchise, everyone was taken by surprise, and for a moment all parties were stupefied. Of the agitation and plans in Paris among the journalists and secret societies we knew nothing in Nantes, and thought that M. de Polignac had taken his measures properly, and would have large numbers of troops ready and able to support the King's cause. The leaders at the capital knew it was not so and they organized the army of insurrection. The pavements of many streets were

immediately torn up, numerous barricades were erected, and word was sent to the various branches of secret associations in the provinces. It soon became evident that the leaders in my own native city were the richest merchants and manufacturers. It must have been so all over France.

The Revolution was undoubtedly carried through by what was called *le haut commerce* and *la grande industrie*, helped by the rabble. The shopkeepers, or *petit commerce*, and the lower branches of the middle-class joined heartily in it only on the last of the three days of July, when it became evident that the conspiracy would succeed in Paris. Early in the morning of the second day, while the shops were all open, the streets of Nantes were invaded by troops of ill-looking and ragged men, running wildly and more afraid of being shot by the soldiers than ready to take action themselves. It was soon known that they had been let loose by the merchants and manufacturers, who had already closed their counting houses and factories, and promised their workmen heavy pay if they showed their courage against the government. As it was the end of July, I was at home on vacation, and made up my mind to see what turn things would take. Our house stood near the Château and the great *Cours* or *Promenade* where conflict between the troops and the rabble would be likely to take place. I was therefore in the best possible position for my purpose, and witnessed the first demonstration of the insurgents, who passed in a hurry before our door on their way to the Place Louis XVI, where the soldiers were already encamped. This fine square was situated between *le Grand Cours* and *le Cours St. André*.

In Nantes, as well as in Paris, there was not one-tenth of the troops required. General d'Espinois, who commanded the garrison, had only a few hundred men to keep order in a city of nearly one hundred thousand inhabitants. He acted prudently and wisely, withdrew his squads of soldiers from all the *corps-de-gardes*, built purposely here and there through the town, eight or ten in number, and ranged this handful of men in a hollow square on the Place Louis XVI in view of the Château, and at the entrance of the Faubourg St. Clément. He thus kept open his communications with Paris, the road to which ran east from Nantes, and was surrounded by a peaceful population. As soon as I came back from church, very early in the morning, I heard from my father the stir that was going on, and before taking breakfast I started for the Place Louis XVI, and saw the troops in fine order forming a square with cannons at the four corners of it. I had just time to return home from this investigation, before the scene I have described took place, and the streets were filled with wild men running in the direction I was coming from, with muskets in their hands. I never felt inclined to fight, even for the good cause, and in truth I was debarred from fighting, being already a deacon. Still I was curious to know something of what was going to take place between the soldiers and the mob.

Without saying a word to my parents, I went out again. Following some back streets, crooked, antiquated, and generally deserted, I started on my foolhardy errand. I was in the Rue Notre Dame when I heard a brisk discharge of musketry, but no cannon. Soon after I was startled by the shrill shout of the attacking column, which had rushed without any order,

and being saluted by the soldiery with a well-aimed round of cartridges, immediately ran away in great terror and confusion. This was the end of the armed conflict. Henceforth the small garrison remained in quiet possession of their quarters and in communication by telegraph with Paris. The city was left to itself, and the rabble, by order of their leaders, the merchants, were stationed in the various *corps-de-gardes* left empty by the troops. Several among the populace had been killed or maimed. I do not remember their number.

All these circumstances denote that conditions in France at that time differed greatly from the present. The workingmen were not enrolled in secret societies, except in that of *compagnonnage*, whose object at that time was to protect the interests and needs of the members. No one had yet heard of the St. Simonians, the Fourierites, much less of the Socialists. The proletarian class were at the mercy of their patrons, who generally gave them enough to eat, but no leisure to engage in political plotting. I have always wondered that the Royalists did not see the importance of enlisting the sympathy of the lower classes by founding Catholic clubs among them, as Ozanam did thirty years ago and Count de Mun is doing at present. There were much better prospects of success at that time than there are now, and many revolutions might have been spared if this had been done as early as 1820.

Meanwhile order was restored in Nantes, both in the parts controlled by the mob and those controlled by the soldiers. Everyone was waiting for the decision in Paris. That the popular party had no grudge against the clergy, in spite of previous attacks in newspapers, was evident from the liberty every priest had

to go wherever he chose, and from the facility everyone had to enter and pray in churches, which no one seemed to be afraid would be attacked by the mob. It was in fact the best-natured rabble I have ever seen. I did not think of taking off my cassock or concealing my tonsure..

It was probably the 28th of July. The weather had been very hot, but I did not intend to deprive myself of my afternoon walk. This usually led me through the Rue Richebourg, which ran parallel to the Faubourg St. Clément but nearer to the river, consequently very near the Place Louis XVI. From this dirty, dusty thoroughfare I could reach the Prairie de Maures, a fine meadow five miles long and bordering on the Loire, in less than fifteen minutes. There I always found a good breeze and green grass. Taking a book with me I usually sat down on the bank of the stream, and could read and meditate as I liked. On the day in question, I went first to the Place Louis XVI, though it made the walk a little longer than usual. But I wished to see how things stood there as well as at the Préfecture which was quite near. At this last place there was nobody in the large square except a few sentinels at the various doors of this fine palace. On the other square where the short conflict had taken place in the morning, I found the soldiers holding the same position as before the struggle. I knew that no one was allowed to come near and talk to them, but I found no hindrance to to my ramblings and there was no pass needed to go wherever I pleased.

I, therefore, walked toward Richebourg which is in sight of the Place Louis XVI and I was just entering the street, when a number of good women came straight

to me, and began to remonstrate with me on account of imprudence. They saw my cassock and appeared alarmed on my account. I asked them what I had to fear and one of them answered, "Troops were coming that way from Paris to reinforce the garrison, and there was danger that the mob might come to meet them." This appeared to me quite natural and I was hestitating whether I should advance or withdraw when to my great surprise a young gentleman, about twenty-four or five years old, who had been listening behind, without my being aware of it, advanced and spoke to me with great politeness and at the same time assurance. "Do not believe, *monsieur l'abbé*, what those foolish women tell you; no troops are coming, no mob will attack any one, and you can go on your walk with perfect security." The young gentleman had not recognized me, though six years before we had been acquaintances, if not friends, at the Petit Séminaire. Having the advantage of him, I slightly bowed, then making a lunge at his hand, I took it and said; "Have you forgotten young Thébaud, Monsieur Scipion Gouin? I thought my features had not changed so much since we knew each other. However, I thank you for your kind information. It must be true because I know that you belong to the side that triumphed to-day." This was certainly my meaning; I forget the exact words. My friend did not let go or spurn my hand, but shook it heartily and we parted from each other.

Scipion Gouin belonged to one of the best commercial firms in Nantes. He was one of the few rich boys, not noblemen, who were sent to the Petit Séminaire for their education. His family must have been Royalist at that time or he would have been educated

at the Collège Royal. But they had in good time joined the Liberal party, and every one in Nantes knew it. When he left me and I continued my walk, I began to muse on the reason he would have for being found alone in such an out of the way place. He lived just at the other end of the city in the fashionable quarter. It was not certainly pleasure or charity that brought him among the ragged population of Richebourg. I could not see any other motive on his part, but the need his party had of sure information as to the peace of the city, and also as to the movements of the King's officials at the Préfecture and the military headquarters. What happened a few days later when the leaders turned their backs on the mob confirmed me in this opinion.

Those gentlemen had to keep a close watch on their *corps-de-gardes* filled with ragamuffins and desperadoes, and as Paris was not yet sure for them, they regarded with becoming respect the royal authorities who were still in possession of the Château and the road to Paris.

When I arrived home long before dusk, I found everything quiet in the city though everybody appeared extremely anxious to know how it would end. The political parties were beginning to agitate each one for its own object. On that day, or very soon afterwards, I read the first proclamation of the St. Simonians, and heard that there was really a republican party in France, though a few weeks before all the party leaders, even the most advanced, professed profound attachment to the Constitution, and consequently to the Bourbons. I made up my mind to obtain some news on which I could rely, more than on the papers which were full of exaggerations on both sides.

I went first to the *Commissaire de Police du quartier* where I lived, who had a sinecure since the police was in the hands of the mob. This office answered nearly to that of a captain of police among us. The men however, stood socially higher, and were educated men, who dressed well, without any sign of livery about them. They corresponded not only with the municipal authorities of the town, but likewise with the Minister of the Interior at Paris. I was well acquainted with our *commissaire* and knew him to be a sincere Royalist and that he was at that moment, poor fellow, losing his employment and his bread. I found him alone in his office and of course, looking sad.

"Is there no hope of saving the dynasty?" I asked. "Where is the King now?"

"The King has left Paris," he replied, "and is now at Rambouillet. The public does not know anything more, but I have received some private information which I can entrust to you, *monsieur l'abbè*, because I know you will keep it to yourself. Some high personages are inducing Charles X to come here, and to confide himself to the Vendeans and Bretons. It is very possible, perhaps even probable, that this will be done."

"If he came alone with only his usual surroundings," I remarked, "coming here would scarcely benefit his cause. You know there is no military organization of any kind among the Royalists, and General d'Espinois has only a handful of men."

"Well," the little man replied, "the King still had fifteen or twenty thousand soldiers with him, and more troops might join him on his way west."

"And whilst they are marching on this way," I

retorted, "Lafayette will soon have hundreds of thousands of national guards: poor troops, it is true, but their overwhelming number is something"

"You are right," he said, "and I have nothing more to say."

"May God have pity on France!" I exclaimed and vanished.

From the Commissary of Police I went to see M. de Courson, whom I found as usual in his Séminaire de Philosophie. He received me very quietly and appeared absorbed in thought. "What news do you bring me, my friend?" he said. "I come to get news from you," I replied. "I have heard, however, that the King is at Rambouillet with some troops, and that he may be coming this way." "Is that known generally?" he asked. "No, but my *Commissaire de Police* told me so under a promise of secrecy which is not for you." Of the rest of our conversation I report the substance. For its better understanding I will prefix a few remarks.

M. de Courson was not only a Royalist, sincerely attached to the Bourbons because he thought that any other government would have been full of danger for France, and chiefly for the Church, but he was, I knew, on confidential terms with the heads of the Royalist party, not only in Nantes, but in the interior of Brittany and perhaps in Paris. His name was one of the best known, and honored in the whole of the west of France. He never, it is true, made any allusion to politics in a general conversation especially with young men like myself. Still sometimes a phrase that escaped him indicated the drift of his thoughts and the extent of his knowledge. With me I thought he was more communicative than with many others. During vaca-

tion he often made me his companion when he wanted to take exercise; and we walked together in the country around Nantes, botanizing and looking for insects, for he was very fond of botany and entomology as a recreation. On many occasions he seemed to have a great deal of confidence in me, he knew me well as he was my confessor, and was not ignorant of my veneration and love for him. I considered him, in fact, a saintly man, though I would never have dared to intimate it in his presence.

With the Royalists in Nantes he had close relations, above all, with Charette, the son of the former celebrated Vendean general, the same who married one of the two natural daughters of the Duke of Berry, confided by this unfortunate prince to his wife Caroline, when he died under the dagger of an assassin. On account of that marriage the husband, who was a little more than thirty-five at the time, usually lived in Paris, but often came to Nantes where I frequently saw him. He had two old maiden aunts, sisters of the great Charette, who lived in seclusion, in a very modest cottage a mile distant from the town on the banks of the romantic Erdre river. M. de Courson paid them frequent visits as they lived near. He even took me thither several times in our botanical rambles, and it was in the little parlor of these old ladies that I saw the only authentic portrait of the Vendean general in existence. It was copied, it is true, from the dead body after his execution in Nantes, and the face was as pale as a sheet, and was represented by the painter as covered with blood, because one of the bullets that killed him struck it; still it was said by the ladies that it bore a perfect resemblance to their brother. Here, probably

M. de Courson went occasionally to see Charette, the younger, when he came to Nantes. I had never before heard of the sisters of the Vendean general.

When the bloody strife of the three days of July was still going on in Paris, and as soon as there was a prospect that the King would have to leave his capital, Charette must have come to Nantes, in view of the project that was then mooted, namely, that the King should fall back on Brittany and Vendée. That M. de Courson was in the secret became clear to me from our conversation, which it is high time to resume.

He told me, that he was aware of a plan of this kind, but he did not know what the final determination would be. I threw out a word or two to draw him out and I was greatly surprised to learn that he would like to see the King in Nantes. That appeared to me the height of folly, as I had already said to the *Commissaire de Police*, and being a young man and very free spoken with the vicar-general, I mentioned with increased emphasis my fear of Lafayette and his national guards. M. de Courson smiled sadly, and said that whatever determination was to come dangers must be encountered, but in his opinion the loss of the King to France was more to be dreaded than any other possible danger. "Do you not see, *mon cher ami*," he said, "that as soon as Charles X is gone to England, France will be the prey of every disorder, perhaps of anarchy, and if the country settles at last into some kind of order, what kind of bishops shall we have, if the government be a republic, or under the Duke of Orleans?"

He did not say anything of the abdication of Charles X which had already taken place, and of the substitution of the Comte de Chambord, then a child under a

regency. But the idea that in the absence of Charles X the choice lay between a republic and the Duke of Orleans had never struck me so much before. I disliked both of them.

I tried to find out if the Royalists in the west of France had made any preparations for the coming of the King. But I saw he understood me and he said no more. "I am not a politician, *mon cher ami*," he said, "and cannot say if the Royalists here are ready or not, and I think we had better stop this conversation and speak of ordinary things." I assured him that not a word he had spoken would pass my lips as long as the circumstances remained as they were, and soon after withdrew. It was manifest that the Royalists were not and could not be ready.

But a few days after this there was a sudden change in the city at least externally. It was now known to all that the King, with all his family, was on his way to Cherbourg where he was to embark for England. What kind of government would we have? The Duke of Orleans was made Lieutenant Governor of the kingdom. The officials appointed by Charles X were practically without power until new ones had been appointed by the new Government. The adventurers into whose hands the police power had fallen were practically the masters of the city. Anxiety filled the hearts of the citizens. My parents also were anxious. They told me that I must leave Nantes until a feeling of security should be restored. My father had taken no part in politics at the Restoration, and he had no political enemies. My mother did not think it worth while to go to La Bernerie, as during the Hundred Days. They must remain in Nantes; their business required it; my presence

instead of helping them might be a source of danger on account of my cloth. I looked for a place in the country where I might rest and be safe.

I had a friend named Poisson who had been a seminarian with me but was not yet ordained. He lived with his family during vacation in a large village or small town called Le Pelerin, just on the southern bank of the Loire, midway between Nantes and the mouth of the river. Without even writing to my friend, as I knew I would be always welcome in his house, I procured from a wig-maker a *toupet* to conceal my tonsure and putting on citizen's clothes that I bought ready-made, I took the first boat that went down the river and was soon out of the city. There was a great crowd of people on the steamer. It was evident that many persons besides myself were afraid of what might happen in Nantes. But what struck me most was their lack of spirit. In public places the French are fond of speaking aloud and conversation always becomes general. Their ways are very different from ours. Here every one speaks to his neighbor or remains silent. On that day, silence was the general rule and if a few indulged in conversation, it was with a friend and in a low tone.

The mass of the people showed no revolutionary symptoms. If a change of rulers had been really desired by the majority of France, it would have appeared everywhere in the enthusiasm and exultation of that majority. But there was no enthusiasm, no exultation even on the part of the Liberals. Another circumstance that struck me was that nobody was reading the papers. Their thoughts were too serious to feel any inclination for that kind of literature. I myself scarcely touched them during those days. You

could not get the truth from them. As they were strongly partisan, the Royalist sheets, as well as the others, you found in their pages only views and surmises favorable to their own party; it was useless to lose your time in reading them. I was not at all pleased on that steamboat. In Nantes, at least, I could hear something reliable from friends. On stepping upon the boat I thought that as usual, and more than usual, there would be on all sides an animated conversation and from this I could draw my own conclusions and learn something. But I was sorely disappointed by the universal mutism I met in the midst of so many frisky Frenchmen.

I thought I had a resource left in the captain of the boat. Those gentlemen in France are always extremely polite and accommodating to their passengers, at least they were in my time. They anticipated your questions and often were the first to speak. If they knew anything of interest to you, you felt that the information they might convey would be honest; you could rely on their good faith. I therefore went straight to the captain's cabin, for I could not find him in any group on the steamer's deck where the captain stands in the midst of an admiring crowd when his office does not call on him for any special duty. Strange to say he was alone in his little den.

"When will you reach Le Pelerin, *monsieur le capitaine?*" said I.

"Precisely at ten minutes to twelve," he replied very politely.

"So I will not be able to dine on board?"

"No, sir, unless you change your mind and come with us to Paimboeuf."

"I cannot do so; but please tell me if there is any stir in all those villages and towns along the river as there is at this time in Nantes and still more in Paris."

"I am sorry I cannot answer your question. These last few days I have not remarked more stir than usual; but you know that I stop only a very few minutes at each landing and have no time to ask questions."

"But at Paimboeuf where you stop, I think, during the night, how are things going on?"

"I see no difference there from formerly. People appear to talk a great deal along this fine ditch of the Loire but as they cannot do anything but talk, I don't care to listen."

I saw the captain was as gruff as his passengers and left him and read a book I had with me. But it became still worse when I landed at Le Pelerin. I met with the kindest reception, but I found all my friends there in perfect ignorance, expecting to hear a great deal from me, but having nothing to communicate. If the country from Nantes to the ocean is a sample of the whole of France, it certainly had no share in the political medley which is called the Revolution of 1830.

The people with whom I went to spend a few days could be truly called a patriarchal family, like many another in France. The father, a most respectable man of nearly sixty, was the best physician of the place, and was always out on calls, except at meal times. But though his practice was extensive, the fees he received must have been rather scant as the population of the village was far from rich. He had to support and educate a family of ten children, and he gave them all, girls as well as boys, a liberal education. He was seconded by his wife, a few years younger than he.

Both had not only sterling qualities of head and heart, and were at the same time excellent Christians, but they were of the most lively and pleasant disposition. In the midst of gloomy anticipations, such as the political and social state of the country suggested, they kept their cheerfulness and left to God the care of future time, certain as they were that they would always have, inside of their house, a sufficiency, and outside plenty of kind neighbors. I do not remember to have asked them which party obtained the majority in their town, but even if the Liberals prevailed, they were not afraid of either insult or injury, though they were, of course, strong Royalists.

The truth is that this feature struck me at that time as of a providential character, namely, that on the day of their victory there was no great animosity on the Liberal side against the friends of the Bourbons. No one spoke of ill-treating them, and they were always allowed openly to express their opinions, even after the complete triumph of liberalism. This was altogether different from what had happened during the first revolution, when even the suspicion of harboring Royalist sentiments was a sure warrant of death against any man. It soon became known that there was a party in France favorable to a republican form of government, and it has been since ascertained that many of the leaders of the victorious faction were so inclined; and they were all finally induced to establish another monarchy with the Duke of Orleans at its head in the hope of having a "citizen king surrounded with republican institutions." Even if a republic had been established, no one thought that the Royalists would be pursued, prosecuted and brought to trial. The

former Reign of Terror was still considered a time of horror by nearly all Frenchmen.

M. and Mme. Poisson had no fear of seeing the rabble, in case there was any at Le Pelerin, raise an outcry against them because of their attachment to Charles X and his dynasty. They continued, therefore, to enjoy life, the more so, that being sincere Christians they had the peace of God with them in the testimony of a good conscience. The old gentleman of course had lived all his life in the same place. As the talk of every body during the time I spent with them was that perhaps there would be a new republic (Louis Philippe had not yet been recognized as king of the French), it was easy at dinner and supper to make him talk of what he had seen from 1790 to 1795. He declared first that there would be a great difference in this new democracy and the previous one. At least no scandal would be given by the clergy. "Do you think, John," said he, addressing one of his children, "that *monsieur le curé*, whom you know so well, will apostatize and marry like another Joyau?" This phrase required an explanation and John was invited to give it. The substance of the story was, that the former *curé* of Le Pelerin, called at that time Monsieur l'abbé Joyau, had seen fit in 1790 to take first the oath to the *Constitution civile du clergé* under the Constituent Assembly, and when the Convention came, he went a step further by apostatizing altogether and taking a wife; so that he was known henceforth as plain Monsieur Joyau. The little fellow, a boy of twelve at that time, knew the family well, as he had gone to school with some of the younger boys of the priest, their father and mother being still alive at the time I was in the village.

"But," said the old gentleman, "you do not answer my question. Do you think, John, that the *curé* we now have will turn to be another Joyau?"

"I am sure not," replied the boy. "Joyau's example gives no encouragement to others, for the Joyaus are despised by everybody around. Do you remember, mother, how when I went to school with those boys, I quarrelled with them every day? The first time I threw dirt on one of them; as soon as you knew it, you gave me a whipping; but after you had done, I told you: 'Mamma send me to another school, or I will do it again if I return; I cannot help it.' Do you remember?"

"It must be so, since you say so," answered the good mother, "but I have no remembrance of it because I suppose I had to do the same too often with you, particularly when you were a little boy. Now it is different. You have more sense and I have not so much trouble."

I have told this story to show what kind of people my new acquaintances were. But I heard something much more interesting from M. Poisson about the celebrated Fouché, whom he had known in his youth. Fouché, according to his biographers, was born in Nantes and was the son of an *armateur au long cours*, that is of an importer of colonial produce on a large scale. This was doing him too much honor. M. Poisson told me that Fouché was born in Le Pelerin, that his father was a poor mechanic, a cooper I think, that all his family were very poor and could scarcely support themselves; that when Fouché, called later Fouché de Nantes, became a great man and rich he refused to have any thing to do with those who

gave him birth, or with his brothers and sisters, who all died in misery in the poor village of Le Pelerin. M. Poisson was so sure of the fact, and was so worthy of credit, that I am convinced he was right. To be sure there is some difficulty in explaining how Fouché could enter and pay his board in the Oratorian College at Nantes, where he certainly studied and joined the order at the end of his course. But he may have been a charity student, just as Maximilian Robespierre, who was also educated at the College of Louis le Grande in Paris at the expense of Mgr. Lamotte, Bishop of Amiens. I am sure that no doubt other revolutionary heroes, Lebon of Arras among them, received all the education they could boast of as alms from the Catholic Church which they afterwards persecuted.

The eldest son of M. Poisson was not the young seminarian I knew, and to whom I owed my acquaintance with his family. He was about eight or ten years my friend's senior. I met him with the other members of the family. The previous month of June he had returned from Paris where he had studied medicine for two or three years. His father had wished him to take his degree of doctor, which would have required a longer time. But he was thoroughly tired of the medical students with whom he had to associate, and he had prevailed on his father to let him return. He had, therefore, taken his degree of *officier de santé*, which in France is just sufficient for a man to practise lawfully as a physician. So he was helping his father, who was to hand over to him his patients at his death or retirement.

This gave me a chance to become acquainted with conditions at the higher schools and the capital. These

students of the polytechnic school, both of medicine and law, were at the time creating much stir in the country. All the liberal papers had spoken with enthusiasm of their patriotism, their courage and their ability in military affairs. These students had reestablished order among the Parisian combatants. Under their vigilant eye, the barricades had been erected in a truly scientific manner. To them in great part the victory was due. Thus they were the heroes of the day and their memory might live as long as that of Leonidas I read at the time the most pompous tributes to the young scapegraces of the Parisian boulevards.

When I arrived at Le Pelerin and became somewhat acquainted with the members of M. Poisson's family, I joked the eldest son on his bad luck and want of foresight in leaving Paris just on the eve of such a harvest of glory. "Think of your bad luck," said I to him, "your name will remain obscure whilst those of your former friends in Paris will live forever. You will not be able to exclaim as they will: 'I was there! I myself pointed that big gun at the corner of such a street, on the top of such a barricade!' Go and hide yourself in the dark woods which form the background of Blue Beard's Castle near Nantes. When I return home, I will take you with me as a cowardly prisoner of war, and shut you up in the keep of that old fortress where I have often had the pleasure of taking a lunch with my friends on some boating day during vacation."

"But seriously, my friend," I added, "had you ever any idea that those young scamps would play such antics as these and become almost the leaders of a

revolution in Paris, a revolution which is accepted by the whole of France, so that at this moment we are all awaiting the decision of our fate from the overgrown city on the Seine?" Most of the students, he said, were rakes and spendthrifts who thought more of enjoying themselves at Mabille with loose women, than of applying themselves to scientific studies. Toward the end of the scholastic year they hastily prepared their examinations. Many failed. There were among them a number of perfect vagabonds, whose lives were ruined. Their appearance the first time I went to Paris produced on me a very unpleasant impression.

What was the character of the celebrated Parisian high schools at this period? I do not here speak of the lectures given at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France by such men as Villemain, Guizot, Cousin, Lenormant and others, nor of the thorough courses of natural and exact sciences taught by Poisson, Cauchy, Dumas, Savart, Pouillet, etc. These were courses of study open to all at which young men assisted or not, as they liked, and on which there were no examinations at the end of the year. If some classes, like those of M. Cousin, were objectionable from a religious point of view, they were in general free from anything worthy of censure and they were well fitted to keep up in France a taste for the highest mental training. But I speak here of the schools of medicine and law to which thousands of students came every year from all parts of the country. The French medical schools enjoyed a great reputation all over Europe. Many of their teachers had made great discoveries in anatomy, physiology, pathology and all the other branches of the healing art. Their clinical lectures in the admirably kept

hospitals of Paris merited all praise. Undoubtedly any young man of talent could become an eminent physician under such a thorough professional training But why did many of the professors, instead of teaching their science, endeavor to spread materialism and atheism? From the middle of the eighteenth century, from the days of the materialist Helvetius down to the second French Empire, nearly all the professors in the medical schools denied the existence of the soul in man.

According to them, matter alone existed, and as soon as the life of the body ceased, man ceased to exist. Some of them, like Cabanis, denied the correctness of this inference. After his death, his widow loudly protested against this charge. But in most cases and especially in Cabanis' case, the evidence was too clear to admit of any doubt. What I have said of Paris is equally true of the other French medical schools; and I still remember well that a young man who studied medicine in Nantes, after having been a fellow student with me in the Petit Séminaire heard, without surprise, the professor of anatomy at the end of an enumeration of the causes of motion in the human body add sarcastically; "There are still some writers who hold that the will has something to do with it." This young man's name was Dupé, born in the village of Doulon near Nantes. He had been in the same class with me from the *sixième* up to the end of our first year of theology; for he first intended to become a clergyman.

He was invaribly at the head of our class and we all considered him the best student among us. After finishing his first year of theology, being already in minor orders, he felt an unaccountable repugnance for the holy state he had always kept in view from his

infancy, and in August, 1827, I think, he declared that at the end of vacation he would not go back with us. A few months later, we learned that he had matriculated in the medical school of the city. Since that time he never called on us, and his former friends were pained to hear that he had left off the practice of his religion. He soon became the best student in that school and after competition was named *elève interne* for his second year. As *elève interne* he had his board, his lodging and all his expenses paid by the city. His rooms, besides, as *elève interne*, were quite convenient for his studies, being in a large and handsome building connected with the general hospital of the city. Thus he had before him every prospect of success in life and of occupying a fine professional position in Nantes at the end of his course of studies.

But an accident soon brought him to his grave. In the dissecting room he one day slightly punctured one of his fingers and the subject on which he was operating having died of a highly contagious disease, he was inoculated with the virus and in spite of the best attention paid to him by the most skilful physicians of the city, he finally perceived himself that his case was desperate. He might still live a couple of months. Then it appeared that his abandonment of all religious practices was not the effect of want of faith but of human respect. He still felt the courage to declare before some of his friends of the medical school that he was a Catholic, and he sent a note to M. de Courson to come and attend to his soul. As soon as this happy change became public, the excellent vicar-general sent for me and told me not to fail to visit Dupé as a friend and renew our former acquaintance.

This I did promptly and enjoyed several long and interesting conversations with him. I asked him why he had given up the practice of religion after he left us. "Were you afraid of being persecuted by your new school mates?" He could not explain how this happened. He never intended to give up his faith. But the world in which he found himself was so different from the one he had lived in before, that he had no the courage to remain the only Christian amid his surroundings. I replied that I knew how godless the world was, but I thought that with the faith that was in him, he could have returned contempt for contempt. "My dear old friend," he retorted, and I am still impressed with the solemnity of his tone, "you do not know how godless the world is. When I was with you, I also thought I knew it; but when I found myself in the midst of it, I had to confess my previous ignorance. Those men are so absolutely opposed to religion, that there can be no *modus vivendi* between them and you. You imagine that when you will be a priest, you will be able to bring some of them to your way of thinking. Humanly speaking, it is impossible. This is the only account I can give of what happened to me when I became a medical student."

On another occasion, I asked him how far materialism prevailed among the professors in Nantes. Was it true that materialism was still openly taught in State schools under the Bourbons? Dupé told me that he was just beginning his course, and had been only a few weeks in that school when the professor of anatomy made the remark given above. When I asked Dupé what impression this statement of the professor had made upon his mind, he answered that for himself, it

excited only his pity because his previous studies had convinced him that the muscles and nerves would not produce motion in man, unless the will acted upon them; and he remembered that he had smiled at this conceit of the professor. But he added that he did not know a single one of his fellow students who did not take this as gospel truth. There might be some who would have questioned it, but they did not dare to speak out.

My new friend, young M. Poisson, was unable to stay any longer in presence of the moral rottenness which was the consequence of disbelief. He could not think of associating with those with whom he must meet in class, in the dissecting room, in the wards of hospitals, wherever the study of his profession called him. So he had come back home; and satisfied with the degree of *officier de santé* he was helping his father in his daily practice. Young Poisson knew little or nothing of the Parisian law students. But in my youth I was acquainted with many young gentlemen, some belonging to noble families, who, after having studied with me in the Petit Séminaire, went to Paris or Rennes to take some degree in law because there was no law college at Nantes. The law students in Paris were generally of a higher class and better behaved than the medical students, and among them was formed the small Christian club, which, under the name of *congrégation*, gave rise to such absurd accusations on the part of the Liberal party. L'abbé Legris Duval, I think, organized it as early as the reign of Napoleon I, and under the Restoration the Jesuit Fathers, called at first *Pères de la Foi*, took charge of it.

There was consequently a spark of faith kept alive

among some law students in Paris in the worst times of this century. But most of the law professors and law students were entirely out of sympathy with the Church. The experiences of young Poisson in Paris agreed with my own. France appeared altogether godless, nay, was animated with hatred of religion. The young physician even had not known the whole extent of the evil, because he associated with almost nobody. Still he was thoroughly disgusted with what he had seen and heard, and I highly honored him for it. But time was passing; I had already spent four days in Le Pelerin with this excellent family, and France was still without a government. Things were, however, preparing for the recognition of Louis Philippe as King. I had written several times to my parents, and received no letter from them. I grew anxious to know how they fared, and a paper published at Nantes which reached me, having given the information that the rabble who were in possession of the *corps de garde* had been dismissed by their patrons with fair words and some money, and that battalions of regular national guards were being organized, I made up my mind to return to Nantes.

The Poisson family did their best to keep me a little while longer, but they understood the cause of my anxiety and let me go. When I reached the upper deck of the steamer which was to take me back to my native city, the crowd, nearly as numerous as when I came down, was this time a true French crowd and everybody was talking aloud and discussing the news of the day. I went straight to the captain, and found him quite lively and ready to talk. He saw that I was one of those that had left Nantes a few days before on account of the threatened disorder.

"Monsieur," he said, "you do well to return, for there is now no reason for an outbreak. Merchants have taken back the muskets which they had foolishly put into the hands of the mob, and there is no fear of pillage as there was a few days ago."

"Glad to hear it," I said, "but how did the business men accomplish this?"

"Easily enough," he replied, "they gave them six francs each and promised them work and good wages; the men agreed to this though some of them were reluctant."

I immediately thought of my friend Scipion Gouin, and felt anxious to know how much his father had had to pay for his share. I found everything right with my parents. They had not written because they felt certain that I knew that the city continued in quiet.

I have said nothing of the terrible scenes which characterized the Revolution of 1830 in the capital, not only in the streets and at the barricades, but also in the Archbishop's house, from which Mgr. de Quélen had to fly. All priests in Paris had to hide, and did not appear in the streets in cassock until 1837. If what I have said appears trifling it has the merit of novelty because no one that I know of has described the little Revolution at Nantes in Brittany.

CHAPTER VIII

PASSIVE ATTITUDE OF THE CLERGY FROM 1830 TO 1832

The popular feeling at the overthrow of the elder Bourbons in 1830 proved that the previous outcry of the Liberal press against the priests for using their influence for political purposes had no foundation. It was only in Paris and Lyons that the rabble seemed to have believed it. The sack of the Archbishop's palace in the capital, and the violent threat against some religious houses, were local features. Nowhere else in France was there any hostility shown against the clergy.

Louis Philippe had no religious convictions, and when he was called to the throne by Lafayette and Lafitte, a friend of the new dynasty whose name escapes me said that the present rulers of the country belonged to the numerous class of those "who did not go to confession,"—*appartenaient à la classe qu'on ne confesse pas.* The friends of religion could not expect favor from the new government. Queen Amélie was a pious woman, but as her husband was a Voltairian, she could not use any influence in favor of the Christian Faith. I remember to have heard an anecdote from Father Badin of Kentucky, which graphically describes the religious state of the court, though it happened before the Revolution

of 1830. The lively old French missionary so well known in the west of this country had gone to France during the reign of Charles X and wished to obtain some presents from the Duke of Orleans for the church of Bardstown. He asked to be received by the Prince, and Louis Philippe, who always remembered with pleasure his trip to the United States during the French Revolution, showed himself extremely amiable and sufficiently generous.

He took Father Badin through the chief apartments of the Palais Royal where he then lived and of course showed him the chapel. In the corner of it there was a small and beautiful alcove with a large confessional of splendid workmanship. "This is for my wife," said Louis Philippe emphatically, "but it has been made under my special orders, and I think I have shown some mechanical talent in its make-up." Then he showed M. Badin that any one could speak aloud in it without being heard outside. "For," said he laughing, "I don't want her secrets to be known."

The witty old missionary only replied that, "His Highness ought to apply to the King for a patent." The answer tickled the fancy of the Prince and made him laugh heartily.

Louis Philippe, however, when he became King of the French accepted and practised at first fairly the axiom of all constitutional monarchies, that "the King reigns but does not govern." Particularly in religious matters was he careful not to use his little finger to incline the balance for or against. But what of his ministers, who with the legislature were supposed to govern the country? How did they regard religion? At the head of his cabinet, Casimir Périer was conspicuous during

the first two years of the new reign. This man was undoubtedly a statesman, though under the former government he had seemed to be a radical, and one of the worst conspirators against the Bourbons. It has been since ascertained, however, that he did not wish their overthrow. Périer was from the start, as Prime Minister of Louis Philippe, firm and uncompromising against the factions and particularly against the republican party which had then great hopes of success.

The new minister, to give stability to Louis Philippe's throne and re-establish order in France, appealed to all the classes of Frenchmen who could help him, but he never thought of calling on religion, to which he remained coldly indifferent until his last moments in May, 1832, when he expressed the wish to die a Catholic and received the last Sacraments of the Church. His attitude to Catholicism during life was that of a man who thought its power entirely gone. A writer in the Paris *Correspondant*, a few months ago (December, 1879) reports a few remarks of Périer which show that he thought the Church was rapidly dying and would soon be buried. He judged of the whole world from what he witnessed in Paris. But if he did not think it worth while to call religion to his aid in his efforts to re-establish order, he was not the man to persecute it, nor even to give it trouble. In the Government, however, as well as in Parliament, there still remained, if not the old hatred, at least a great deal of the former mistrust and suspicion of the Church, so that up to 1835 no sign was given by the authorities that they knew there was still a Catholic Church in France, except that the meagre pittance given to bishops and priests was regularly paid. A strange fact of which

I was the astonished witness in 1835 will explain the case better than many remarks will do.

I was then one of the curates of the church of St. Clément in Nantes. One Sunday when I preached, I remarked to my surprise a number of *enfants de troupes* who stood near the main door of the church under the supervision of a sergeant. They called *enfants de troupes*, in France, the male children of the few privates who are allowed to marry, and to have their families brought up in the midst of the regiment. As soon as I came down from the pulpit, I sent the sexton with an order to give chairs to those poor boys, and to tell the sergeant to call on me in the sacristy after Mass. "*Mon camarade*," said I when he came, "I was glad to see you and your children, but would like to know how it is that you finally appeared among us on a plain Sunday like today." "Monsieur le Curé," he replied, "Monsieur le Commandant wishes that the *enfants de troupes* should come to church every Sunday to receive instruction and prepare for the First Communion." There is no need of mentioning that M. Bouyer, the excellent parish priest of St. Clément, was very happy to call the following day on Monsieur le Commandant, and make arrangements with him to carry out his intention.

The barracks of the regiment which formed the garrison in Nantes stood within the limits of St. Clément's parish. From the day the Duke of Orleans became king, the chaplains in the army and navy were dismissed, and no French troops were taken to church on Sundays. The same policy was followed in Africa where Algiers had been conquered by the armies of Charles X, and where Louis Philippe's troops were warring with the Berbers. In this war thousands of the French soldiers

perished on the battlefield or in the hospitals without being cheered by the last rites of religion. In Nantes the same system led to the neglect of the religious education of the *enfantes de troupes*. On the occasion we have mentioned, Monsieur le Commandant had probably received an order from Paris to see that the *enfants de troupes* made their First Communion.

This incident took place in 1835. What was the attitude of the French clergy toward the government between 1830 and 1832? The French clergy were taken by surprise at the sudden success of the insurrection in Paris. I still remember the remarks of a Sulpician, the worthy treasurer of the Grand Séminaire, M. Boiteux, (I think that was his name) when walking with me in the streets of Nantes at the first news of the *Ordonnances* of Charles X. We were dressed in cassocks. A number of low bred people looked at us with lowering brows. "In a week's time," said M. Boiteux, "they will give up scowling." I had my misgivings, but few of my confrères suspected that the King had taken the step without being prepared to crush opposition. So they were all bewildered by what followed.

One of them, an excellent man, M. Radu, a *prêtre habitué* of St. Croix, formerly my own parish, who had passed through the first Revolution, and thought that this one would be equally terrible, died of fright. Another, the curé de St. Pierre, M. Audrain, my former professor of rhetoric, who believed the rambling stories of a deluded woman when she foretold the near approach of the Day of Judgment, saw the coming of Anti-Christ and the dreadful persecution of a Satanic power. Many others did not express their opinions; still their thoughts must have been gloomy. Two reasonable men among

them spoke more according to the dictates of good sense.

M. de Courson when he saw his hopes vanish, and that Charles X, instead of coming from Rambouillet to Nantes, went directly to Cherbourg on his way to England, began to speculate on the probable doings of Louis Philippe and feared nothing worse than the appointment of unworthy bishops. But M. Morel, a Sulpician also, the Superior of the Grand Séminaire, who had seen all the vagaries of the first Revolution, from the first days of the extraordinary enthusiasm of the French in 1789 to the panic under the Reign of Terror, declared that as the opening of this new political outbreak was so different from the first, it could not bring on the same frightful calamities. The great mass of the clergy, however, were stupefied and scarcely knew what to think. Two months later I went to the Petit Séminaire to teach and found myself in the genial company of young ecclesiastics full of ardor and buoyancy, thinking only of the present and leaving the future to God. Our hopes soon began to revive, because we saw that everything would go on the same as before. My chief companions and friends were Benoist de Vay; Eugène Gardereau of Angers (who is now a Benedictine of Solesme); Lehuédé of Batz; Lelassuer of Nantes and Erault. We resolved to subscribe to all the reviews and papers which could give us an insight into the situation. So we thenceforth received the *Correspondant*, the *Avenir*, the *Gazette de France*, the *Globe* and the *European* with some other magazines. Our old professors, such as M. Mauloin, M. Janneau, M. Girard, a *professeur émérite*, continued to receive the *Quotidienne* and the *Ami de la Religion* which henceforth dropped

the end of its title *et du Roi*. This gave a proof of our good sense but there was no denying that all through the diocese the *curés* and *vicaires* were dumfounded, and, although on the recommendation of the bishop, they had the *Domine Salvum fac Regem* sung every Sunday in the churches in honor of Louis Philippe, they did not feel much love and admiration for the son and heir of Philippe Egalité. Still they kept quiet and assumed a passive attitude, believing that Louis Philippe's reign would last a few months and be followed by a republic, preparatory to another restoration. In the country parishes they received the *Quotidienne* or the *Journal des Villes et des Campagnes* and believed implicitly what they read in those Royalist sheets. I myself imagined that the new Government could not last more than five years, and I was in favor of a federal republic, so as to break down the system of centralization which had well nigh destroyed France since its establishment in 1789. But I found myself alone in my opinion, and did not think it worth while to bring my friends over to my views as we were all persuaded that the march of events would soon carry the nation into a new path. The French clergy consequently remained passive.

Two or three unworthy priests among the forty thousand then living in France took advantage of the new situation to free themselves from their sacred obligations. L'abbé Chatel opened in France his *Eglise Catholique Française* and soon a branch of it was established at Nantes supported by *le haut commerce et la grande industrie*. For it is a fact worthy of notice that the new schism of Chatel would not have had a single partisan in Nantes had it not been for the business men,

who hired a public building for a church devoted to the new worship, paid the priests for a large book of liturgy in French, gave good salaries to the suspended priests whom Chatel sent from Paris, and finally paid generously the singers of the Opera Bouffe of La Place Graslin for going through the Sunday service. According to the new ritual there was a mass for Talma, another for Voltaire, I think, and another for Vincent de Paul. All those expenses must have amounted to a great sum, but the merchants acted generously, not because they believed in the new faith proclaimed by Chatel, but merely to show their opposition to the Catholic Church. Such were the feelings of the upper classes of society towards religion! All the clergy of the diocese lamented these sacrilegious freaks. Not a single one, even if suspended, disgraced himself by associating with these schismatics, and in the whole of France scarcely half a dozen men, ordained in the Church, participated in a comedy which the Government itself had to put an end to a few years afterwards.

The Duchess de Berry

CHAPTER IX

THE PROJECTS OF THE DUCHESS OF BERRY LED THE CLERGY TO TAKE A PART IN POLITICS AFTER 1832

When Charles X sent in his abdication, it was in favor of his grandson the Comte de Chambord, and the Duchess of Berry, the mother of the child, was appointed Regent. This was legitimate according to the constitution under the Bourbons, which had not yet been abolished. But the new Government in publishing the abdication of Charles made no mention of his appointment of a regent; and Louis Philippe was declared King of France.

The Duchess of Berry naturally considered this a revolutionary measure of no constitutional value. Whilst therefore the old King went with his family to England, she hurried through Germany and Italy trying to gain partisans among European princes, and to prevent them from acknowledging as a *de facto* government the faction which ruled in Paris. She remained for a certain time in Rome, where the Pope must have received her very kindly, not only because this was always done in the Eternal City to illustrious exiles, but chiefly because the new revolution in France could not be welcome to the rulers of the Catholic Church. But as Gregory XVI shortly afterwards recognized the *fait accompli* in France and received the envoy of Louis

Philippe (he was bound to do it for the good of souls), the spirited mother of Henry V could rely only on the French Royalists who then resided in Italy, and on the few Italian noblemen who favored her cause. European governments had already deserted the cause of the Bourbons.

With the aid of some friends a steamer, the Carlo Alberto, was chartered, and the Duchess landed on the coast near Marseilles. After a vain attempt on her part to be acknowledged in that city, she was obliged to ramble in disguise through the country and naturally turned her eyes towards Brittany and the Vendée. The whole of France lay between her and those distant provinces. A regular secret service was established from the country seats of the noblemen in Provence, to those in Burgundy, then to those in Berry, Touraine, and Anjou. Soon a few friends of the Bourbons in Nantes received and answered despatches from the sanguine mother of Henry V. In this way I myself became entrusted with the secret, and these are the plain reasons why a number of clergymen in Nantes and the surrounding district became actively engaged in politics.

The Petit Séminaire of Nantes had been for twenty years at least the ordinary seat of learning in which the children of the nobility from Vendée, Brittany, and Anjou had received their education. The Orleans were looked upon by nearly all those boys with hatred, the elder Bourbons were their idols. It happened that some of the gentlemen who were in active correspondence with Marie Caroline, as the Duchess of Berry was familiarly called by them, had their sons educated with us. I was then a teacher of elementary mathematics, and knew many of them. One day I received

a visit from the father of one of my boys, who told me he had come to ask a favor of me, and was sure I would comply. Being fully persuaded that nothing could be asked of me but what was honorable, I of course answered that if it was in my power I would do so with the greatest of pleasure. Then he told me of what has just been related. All I knew was that the Duchess was in Provence and wished to come West.

The activity of the police in Nantes was such, he said, that the Royalists had to take the greatest precautions in sending or receiving letters. Not only had they arranged secret agents, but their most important communications were written by hands which the agents of the government could not possibly find out in case they got possession of the letters some way or other. He wished me to copy two of those communications which were by far the most important that had ever been sent by them to Provence. He knew that although a sincere Royalist myself, I could not have fallen under the suspicion of the police authorities of Nantes, owing to my careful reserve, and moreover my handwriting was unknown at the headquarters of the police.

The papers I was requested to copy were two *memoirs*; one gave the reasons why the Duchess of Berry should come to Nantes with confidence, and developed the reasons for hope in the success of the undertaking; the other presented the contrary view; so that the Princess could form her own opinion, and come or not as she chose. I thought the first view foolish and the second reasonable. I told the gentleman that this was my opinion. I would nevertheless comply with his request and write both papers very faithfully, on one condition, however. This was that I should be

permitted to add a few words of my own at the end of the negative memoir. I thought that perhaps I might find some better reason than even those which were detailed by the gentlemen opposed to the project. But I was mistaken. When I read the papers I did not see what more could be said against the project and I simply copied them as they were and gave them back to the gentleman.

Marie Caroline came to the country south of Nantes after many romantic adventures. She proceeded so boldly yet warily that she finally reached the friends who had given her encouragement in their memoir. Near Montaigu in the château de la Prenille, in the very heart of the old Vendée, she began to form her plans and at first she thought that her presence would excite the former enthusiasm. She was undoubtedly a very fascinating woman though far from handsome; a few words from her generally gained over the heart of the listener. But before her coming, no organization had been attempted and she began a rambling life from château to cottage, from small towns to farm houses. The prospect so bright at first soon became discouraging, because the peasants, satisfied with the religious and civil liberty they enjoyed, did not join in the movement, and the royalist gentlemen and nobles were too few to strike a blow that would stimulate the numerous friends that were scattered throughout the country. Charette, however, and de la Roberie joined their forces on June 6, 1832, and found themselves at the head of five hundred men. They took their position near a village called Le Chêne where they waited for the government troops. General Dermoncourt had been appointed by Louis Philippe commander of the military division

which comprised the departments of Loire Inférieure and Vendée, and he was stationed at Nantes. Charette and de la Roberie, being attacked by the National Guards of the district and several companies of the 44th regiment of the line, successfully repulsed them and would have gained the day, had it not been for the arrival of a full battalion of regular soldiers who obliged the Royalists to retire with severe loss on both sides. On the same day another fight took place in another locality but which created a far greater sensation. This was the skirmish of La Pénissière, which, General Dermoncourt, in a book that he wrote afterwards, did not hesitate to say was one of the most remarkable feats of arms in modern warfare. I happened to be acquainted with several young men who took part in it. Some thirty of our students were engaged in it. I do not know how it was that so many of our students had formed the rash project of leaving the college grounds by leaping from some of the windows at night as soon as they received the signal. They had been enlisted by some Legitimist agents and I suspect that the parents of some of our boys had managed the whole affair.

At the beginning of June they received an order to be ready for starting during the night between the fifth and sixth, so as to be very early at La Pénissière, a few miles south of Nantes. But on the day before a counter order came. As soon as I was apprised of it, I thought with pleasure that the project had been abandoned and nothing would turn up. But during the following night, six of the students, out of the thirty that had enlisted, disappeared from the college.

La Pénissière was an old *gentilhommière*, as the

French language has it, not far from Clissan in the neighborhood of Le Pallais, the birthplace of the celebrated Abelard. It was a building in the form of a parallelogram with thick walls, and a double row of ordinary windows and a gate in front. It had been a long time uninhabited, and belonged to one of the gentlemen connected with the plot. In front there was a large yard surrounded by a wall a few feet high, and behind the building a spacious vegetable garden extended as far as a small stream deep enough to drown a man, but easy to swim across. I visited the place after the conflict.

When six young friends of the Petit Séminaire arrived at the château early on June 6th, they found assembled there a number of ardent young Royalists, or rather Legitimists, as they began to call themselves. The whole troop amounted to about sixty. Had there not been a counter order, there would have certainly been several hundred of them present. One of their number directly assumed command; they all had plenty of cartridges, besides a large quantity of powder and ball. Most of these improvised soldiers had procured blunderbusses. A long pole had been erected on the roof of the building by its owner and a white flag with the lilies and the crown was soon raised amid the discharge of their guns and the cry of *Vive Henri Cinq*. Dermoncourt, who during the night had heard from his spies their intention, early dispatched a part of the twelve hundred men who formed the garrison of Nantes, so that they arrived at La Pénissière a short time after the handful of Vendeans had taken their position.

The plan of defence was very simple; it was to leave

the yard free for the troops to come through to their door but shoot them down before they reached it. The windows were to remain open; four or five men were appointed to stand near each of them protected by the intermediate walls. All their manœuvres consisted in jumping constantly from their place of security to the open windows, firing their blunderbusses into the ranks of their assailants and leaping behind the walls again before the soldiers could take aim at them. They had left the ground floor of the château empty as they had not men enough to occupy it. But they had barricaded the only stairs which led to the first floor above, leaving, however, a trap over the main door through which they could shoot the soldiers who would enter the building. If reduced to the necessity of retreating they could leap down from the back windows, run through the garden behind and then swim across the stream before the soldiers could pursue them.

As soon as the troops arrived in front, the colonel in command sent a flag of truce to summon the rebels to surrender; and the commander of the Vendeans replied they would rather die for Henry V. The colonel, afraid of a *sortie*, kept his men behind the wall of the enclosure and ordered them only to answer the enemy's fire. Several of them were soon killed or wounded while not a single Vendean was touched. This lasted, I was told, more than an hour; and would have continued the whole day had not the colonel concluded that the only soldiers before him were those who appeared at the windows. Then he commanded his men to jump over the wall and at their head he marched across the yard to the building. Here they

were safe, but having no ladders and no heavy material to batter down the walls, they were compelled to break down the door. This was very strong and resisted their efforts. Finally they sent a party to procure firewood and burned the gate. This was the only sign of fire that was visible at the château after the engagement.

The colonel admiring the bravery of the defenders again summoned them to surrender on honorable conditions. Their answer was; *Vive Henri Cinq.* By this time the door was on fire and it was at last burst open. The Vendean's plan was carried out and the first two soldiers that entered were shot. The mass of the troops, however, now rushed in and it was time for the young heroes to withdraw. They marched through the garden and had nearly reached the little stream, when the trumpeters, thinking there could not be any more danger, struck up a lively air. This freak, however, brought a few soldiers into the garden and two young cadets were shot. The rest escaped and returned home. My friends came back to the Petit Séminaire and related the whole story with many more details.

Marie Caroline, after the ruin of her hopes, hid in the houses of her friends. The Government knew she had not left the country and in fact could not leave it on account of the distance from the sea, whose shores were well guarded all along the Pays de Retz. Spies and informers were sent after her; and though she was sure of the loyalty of her friends she saw the danger she constantly incurred if she remained in La Vendée. All the noblemen's country seats and houses were visited by the police by day and by night and she had finally

to conceal herself in peasants' cabins, or woodcutters' huts. At last, she felt that her best place of safety was in Nantes. In the disguise of a peasant woman, she started on foot with a few female friends and reached la Barrière St. Jacques on the southern bank of the Loire. There was at that place a small *bureau d'octroi,* where country people who brought in provisions and fruits to sell in the city paid the custom duty of a few *sous* for each of their baskets.

To give an idea of the Duchess' boldness, I cannot do better than relate a little anecdote that soon became known to the friends of her cause. When she reached the part of the bridge where the customs officers were stationed, a country woman was taking from her head a basketful of apples in order to pay the duty; many of the apples fell on the ground. The Duchess threw herself on all fours and gathering the fruit placed them back in the basket and jokingly told the girl she ought to be more careful in presence of such fine gentlemen. This was a great imprudence as her language was very different from the peasant *patois;* but all the by-standers laughed heartily and she entered Nantes without being questioned. She took refuge at the house of the *demoiselles* de Guigny. These were two highly respectable old maiden ladies, who occupied an unpretentious house just opposite the château. From the windows they could see the evolutions of the troops entering and departing. Here she remained safe in the hands of her friends, high and low, until she surrendered to the enemy.

The romantic adventures of the Duchess of Berry attached the clergy of Brittany and La Vendée to the cause of the fallen King and his family. They thought

that the revolution they had just witnessed left the rights of the former King and his grandson intact, and that all Frenchmen were bound in conscience to repudiate the new Government. In their opinion, to conspire against it was lawful if there was any chance of success. I did not see any myself; but many other clergymen were of a different opinion. Consequently in the preparations for the Royalist insurrection of June, priests of every degree had not scrupled to lend their aid. Many meetings of noblemen and gentlemen had been held in the houses of some *curés* south of the Loire; and the peasants had been urged by their pastors to join in the movement. The Government suspected it and many spies were paid for the purpose of ascertaining the complicity of the priests, and the special objects of attack when the movement would take place. The information the authorities received was sometimes correct but much oftener wide of the mark.

Directly after the failure of the plot a number of people of every condition in life were seized by the police and carried to jail in Nantes. During the raids, not less than eighty, perhaps as many as a hundred had been incarcerated. Noblemen, gentlemen, merchants and artisans, clergymen, peasants, mechanics, were all brought together into a huge and sombre looking edifice which had been lately erected to replace the old Bouffey which had been the prison of Nantes since the Middle Ages. Among the prisoners was M. le curé de Ligne, M. Michon, my former educator and kind protector at St. Jacques'. I imagine that his old Vendean enthusiasm had gotten the better of his prudence. It was, of course, my duty to see him. I waited a

couple of days, because according to French law no one can speak to a prisoner immediately after his arrest. The *Juge d'instruction* must first subject him to a long interrogatory in which the culprit often betrays himself and thus conviction is more easy. I presented myself at the office of the *Procureur du Roi*, who was at that moment one of the Demangeat family, and a pass was given me by one of the clerks. But at the jail the pass did not procure me admittance. Nay, I was roundly abused by the jailer as if I had been one of his birds, so that he could berate me to his heart's content. I felt irritated and walked straight to the house of the *Juge d'instruction* who, however, had just left for his country seat in the neighborhood where he usually spent the night. However, in answer to a letter which I wrote to him, he sent me a card ordering the jailer to admit me. I was soon therefore closeted with M. Michon. I learned that he had been able to deny all the charges against him; in fact he had been arrested instead of another *curé* who was his neighbor. The *Juge d'instruction* was puzzled and M. Michon dwelt upon the unreliability of the person who had denounced him and finally satisfied the judge of his innocence.

This proves that though the Government looked on religion with distrust and indifference, officials were disposed to show indulgence and consideration to the clergy. As I said before, Royalists and clergymen were not disturbed except in a few places and they could express their opinion without danger. Men of all parties had been alternately in power or under the ban, and the people in general began to consider even violent outbreaks with a certain indifference. The Legitimist prisoners soon found this out. Life in jail became

almost a pleasure party and many of the prisoners spoke of it afterwards with the greatest glee as of a rather amusing experience. M. Michon, however, preferred to go home. Those who remained in prison disposed of their time according to their own programme.

The Government decided that all the prisoners, except the *demoiselles* de Guigny, should be tried by a military tribunal (*conseil de guerre*). But the Court of Cassation interfered and remanded them to the Court of Assizes at Blois, consequently before a jury, and at a good distance from the seat of the insurrection. This indicated a mild sentence and the acquittal of a great number. Berryer was, through a puerile blunder, implicated in the trial by the Government. This was due to foolish irritation on the part of the ministry. The eloquence of the great orator had a powerful influence on the jurymen. A few defendants were sentenced to a short imprisonment, the rest acquitted.

Of the half dozen clergymen who were included in the number, as far as I remember, not a single one was found guilty. The *demoiselles* de Guigny were not charged with being implicated in the plot. They were indicted for having harbored the Duchess of Berry and they were to be tried at Nantes. Berryer, who had been already set free at Blois, declared at once that he would plead their cause. Everybody was on tiptoe at Nantes when we heard he was coming. The attorney for the prosecution was M. Demangeat. The Demangeats were not upstarts. I never heard that they had acquired the ample means they enjoyed by buying confiscated property during the Revolution. Had they done so they would have been Jacobins, not Liberals.

Their ancestors had been respectable people under the ancient régime and they tried to continue to be so in a new way in their country. This was true at that time of many Liberals, who consequently could be distinguished from Jacobins.

The father of the Demangeat family was a venerable man. He looked to me like a patriarch when we met him in our rambles at St. Jacques, carrying his gold-headed cane and wearing his neat and becoming suit cut almost in the old fashion. He was even a religious man and appeared often in church; and when M. Michon was with us he came invariably to shake hands and have a pleasant chat with him on the road. He would not have hooted us, as some members of his family once did. Why was there such a difference between the father and the children? The only reason I know of was that he had sent his boys to be educated at the Lycée under Napoleon and at the Collège Royal under the Bourbons. During the reign of Charles X the Université de France brought up a numerous generation of young Voltairians and anti-monarchists ready on all occasions to lead the mob to the attack on royalty and on the Church. They had succeeded in July, 1830.

The Demangeat family were numerous. They lived with their honorable father in a splendid country seat, on the outskirts of Nantes, along the banks of the delightful Sèvres river above its junction with the Loire. Thus they were very near neighbors of M. Michon, who knew them all, but saw very few of them at church. Of course against so powerful an advocate and orator as M. Berryer was, M. Demangeat was doomed to failure from the first. The jury acquitted Mlles. de Guigny without rising from their seats and the

gentlemen of Nantes escorted them home through the streets of the city.

The Breton clergy remained loyal to the Bourbons and opposed the Orleans. They continued to work secretly against them. Strange to say, the Bishop of Nantes took no part in these occurrences; but although of a very timid disposition, he left his priests free to do as they pleased. They knew that if they got into difficulty, they would be abandoned to their fate. Not that he would be insensible to it, but because he was helpless and unable to render them service, having no friendly relations with the Ministers at Paris, perhaps not even with the Prefect of the city and the general commanding the troops. I shall briefly describe his character and position in the State, particularly as all the French bishops under Louis Philippe were in a similar situation.

M. Micolon de Guérines belonged to a noble family of Auvergne. He had succeeded M. d'Andigné of Anjou who was Bishop of Nantes only two or three years. Both were connected with the highest Legitimist families in their provinces. This indicates the policy of the Bourbons in their choice of bishops and other church dignitaries. They invariably selected noblemen's sons of good morals, of sufficient and occasionally eminent theological learning, but not born in the province where they were to rule. The nomination to those high church benefices was made apparently by the King, but in fact by the Minister of Worship who was then always a bishop. M. de Frayssinous long filled that position, and was succeeded under Charles X by M. Feutrier, Bishop of Beauvais.

M. de Guérines had followed the courses of the Sor-

bonne before the Revolution, and M. Duvoisin, the celebrated Bishop of Nantes, under Napoleon, had been his professor of dogmatic theology. Gallicanism was then rampant and continued to be so under the Empire and the Restoration. It must be said, however, that there was scarcely anything aggressive in those Gallican prelates; and if some of them wrote in defence of the "Four Articles" (as they were called) they always took care to lay down a broad distinction between their own principles and those of legists or parlamentarians, whose evident object in their advocacy of the Gallican "Liberties" was to enslave the Church and bind her hand and foot. To save Catholicism as far as possible from enslavement and give a mild meaning to the famous "Articles," was undoubtedly the quintessence of M. Guérines' theology. As an administrator, he was extremely prudent and wise; and I have heard him discuss matters of importance with a great deal of good sense and lucidity. But like all aristocratic dignitaries, he never personally appeared to enforce his decisions, which were always left for execution to the care of his vicars general or secretaries. He carried timidity so far that, though he could speak in a very interesting manner, I never heard him preach on any public occasion; and even when he gave Confirmation to children they were always addressed by his secretary, M. Charles Vrignaud. As to a sermon in his cathedral, I am sure that he never placed himself in such danger of failure.

This policy, which would now appear strange in a French bishop, was then considered a matter of course. If M. de Forbin Janson, Bishop of Nancy, acted differently and preached often, it was, I suppose

because he had been a *missionaire de France* before he was raised to the episcopal dignity, and on this account he always felt an inclination to speak in public. Louis Philippe rendered great service to religion in France by having bishops taken from the ranks of the ordinary parochial clergy, full of activity and many of them excellent speakers; he scarcely ever nominated a nobleman for such an important office. To this must be attributed the extraordinary influence which has since been wielded by the French episcopate. The bishops appointed after 1830 took a position in the State which they never had under Louis XVIII or Charles X, though owing to the Revolution, which drove away the Bourbons, they seldom if ever appeared at court, whilst their predecessors were often seen at the Tuileries.

Their new power came from their action on the people. M. de Guérines seemed to have a great influence in Nantes in official quarters before the fall of Charles X. But after that he would not have dared, unless on compulsion, to apply for the smallest favor to the Tuileries. The semi-political power of the bishops, such as they had during the Restoration, was entirely gone. The new bishops recovered it by a more active life and mostly through the people. M. de Guérines had no influence over the ruling classes of society under Louis Philippe, because on account of his silence he was unknown to them.

For various reasons, therefore, the new Government, until 1837, stood aloof from the Church. In the west, it even went so far as to subject clergymen and religious to petty vexations, bordering sometimes on persecution. It was only after 1837 that a change appeared in official quarters. On a certain occasion in 1833 I was stopped

by a policeman at the gate of Nantes, and prevented from going a few miles in the country whither I had been invited to dine. No reason was given for this annoyance. Many of my confrères suffered more than I did from this illiberal pettiness of our rulers. The pretended Liberal papers continued their daily attacks on clergymen with as much acrimony as during the Restoration. Equality before the law had been proclaimed long before, but ecclesiastics were not allowed the benefit of this solemn declaration. The change in 1837, therefore, was most remarkable.

As evidence of the spirit of mistrust of anything connected with religion at first displayed by the Orleans government I may mention: first, inquisitions by the police in the petits and grands séminaires and particularly the closing of the Petit Séminaire at Nantes during several days for a thorough search into all the rooms and offices of the house, where the police claimed that Charette had hidden himself. Second, a visit of the same nature paid to the Visitation nuns, probably because Madame de la Ferronays was their superioress. Third, an obligation imposed on the Trappist monks of Melleray to disperse, leaving in the monastery only nineteen persons in conformity with an old law against associations by which twenty or more members could not reside in the same house; besides many other vexatious measures of the same character which were as annoying as significant.

At the same time the government met with much more opposition from the Republicans than from the Legitimists. In February, 1831, there was an uprising in Paris in which the Church suffered more than the Government and which was the work of Republicans.

In November of the same year the Lyons workmen, excited by democratic and anarchical factions, made themselves masters of the city, which was soon reoccupied by the government troops under Marshal Soult. In 1832 the Republicans again attempted another assault, called *Complot des tours de Notre Dame*, which was promptly suppressed. At the time, in 1832, that some few Vendeans took up arms in the neighborhood of Nantes, the formidable Republican associations of the *Amis du peuple* and the *Société des droits de L'homme et du Citoyen*, were organized in Paris and from that city as a centre soon spread all over France. The first outbreak of these Republican organizations took place in Paris on June 5th, when a battle between the troops and the people turned out to be more bloody than the July insurrection which drove away the Bourbons. The following day, the 6th, the fight was renewed, chiefly in the Quartier St. Méry and a large addition to the list of the dead on both sides was the result. The Government triumphed over the mob, Paris was declared to be in a state of siege and the public schools of Alfort together with the Ecole Polytechnique were closed on account of the participation of their students in the riot. Unquestionably the Republican opposition to the July Government was much more active and troublesome than that of the Legitimists. Nevertheless, after the suppression of both Legitimists and Republicans the partisans of the republic who had only expressed their opinion were left undisturbed and free to resume their agitation; whilst on the side of the Legitimists, the classes who were known to lean toward the elder Bourbons without conspiring were pursued by the police with great severity.

My cassock sufficed to hinder my free movements, and Sisters and monks who never dreamed of taking up arms were subjected to vexations justified only by old laws, or were annoyed by the intermeddling of the police as if they had been criminals. If individual Republicans had been the victims of the same annoyances, all the Liberal papers, by far the most numerous in France, would have raised an outcry which the Government probably dreaded, and this was, I suppose, the reason why the Republicans were treated with more consideration. But the difference was significant. It proved that the Republicans were so strong that the Government dared not attack them, whilst the supporters of the old monarchy were but a handful of proscribed men fighting for a cause which was legitimate *de jure*, but reduced *de facto* to a faction incapable of resistance.

In 1833 I discussed the future of France with my friends in the Petit Séminaire of Nantes. All the young professors were, like myself, strong Legitimists; but they were far from perceiving, as I did to a certain extent, that the Bourbon rule was no longer possible in France. None of them saw that the choice lay between the Orleans dynasty and a republic, and their devotedness to Henry V effectually blinded them to the true issue of the day. "Look at public opinion," I told them, "and see how few share in our desire of another Restoration. The attempt made by the Duchess of Berry is a proof of what I say." They asked me whether I was also becoming a Republican, and I replied that my horror of the First Revolution had not abated in the least; only, since a monarchical government was evidently opposed by a great number

of Frenchmen, it might perhaps be possible to have a democracy without a return to the former tyranny.

This tyranny came from the establishment of a *république une et indivisible*, and the rejection of a federal form which would have warded off the danger of an excessive centralization. The former provinces of the old monarchy could easily be revived, I thought, since the French had not yet forgotten them and constantly referred to them in their conversation. The nomenclature by departments had scarcely entered into the habits of the people; and all the inhabitants of Nantes, for instance, knew well that they belonged to Brittany, whilst the term Loire Inférieure (the name of the new department) was often used as a joke. I thought in fact that we might be very happy in our republic (or state) of Bretagne and could have a pleasant and useful legislature in Rennes or Nantes as the majority would prefer.

Eugène Gardereau was one of those young professors of whom I have spoken. He was from Angers and belonged on the side of his mother to the family of Larévellière Lépaux, the famous founder of the Théophilanthropes. But he was an excellent Christian, as were all his family, and was waiting for his ordination in order to go back to Angers where the bishop (Mgr. Montant) was to give him a canon's stall in his cathedral. Soon, however, he joined the Benedictines of Solesmes where he is still alive and known in France under the name of Dom Eugène Gardereau. He laughed at me when I proposed my federal republic and Brittany as a State.

"Do you not see," he said, "that the number of those who would consent to do away with a centralized

government in France is even much smaller than the Legitimist party, small as it is. And besides, supposing a scheme of federal States was adopted, it would require a great deal of simplicity on your part to suppose that your legislature at Rennes or Nantes would be a pattern of liberality and good nature. I am afraid that your thirty odd legislatures in the whole country would be as noisy, impracticable and tyrannical as the single legislature in Paris or Versailles and I leave you to imagine what would be the state of France in a year or two in case your new hobby should be realized."

Eugène Gardereau was right. This state of uncertainty continued in France until 1848. But long before this I had left the country forever, and consequently could no longer make it the subject of my personal observations. Before, however, bringing these considerations on France to an end, I must indulge in a few rambling thoughts which could not easily enter into the train of ideas suggested by the single facts which go to form my individual history.

CHAPTER X

FRANCE FROM 1835 TO 1838

In 1835 I travelled extensively in the central part of France, never having gone out of Nantes since my trip to Paris in 1832. The reader remembers in what state I had then found religion in the capital of the country. But I was gratefully surprised only three years later. I had already heard from friends that a change for the better was perceptible almost everywhere, and that the hatred of priests had abated to a remarkable degree, but I was not fully prepared for what I found.

Men still travelled in mail coaches and diligences and no railroads had as yet been constructed, except two small branches between Paris and Versailles and St. Germain. The way time was spent in those vehicles has been described, and the reader knows what during many years was the position of a clergyman on those occasions, either when the conversation was general, and he was left to himself as an outcast, or when he was addressed in the manner best calculated to wound his feelings. But everything appeared different in 1835. There was, it is true, no more religion in France than formerly, and I remember how I was shocked on Sundays and on holydays by the total disregard of the Lord's day. I noticed this, for instance, at Moulins, where the only sign of rest visible in the streets consisted

of several high platforms on which mountebanks played their tricks and wretched fiddlers grated on your ears by their discordant tunes. But in public coaches or hotels, clergymen were no more exposed to abuse and insult. They could take part in the conversation as everyone else; and there was even something respectful in the demeanor of the other passengers toward them. This respect was shown by all classes of people.

I remember how on one occasion, I interested two workmen who were travelling in the diligence, and appeared desirous of showing in their talk and demeanor the good breeding of gentlemen. At a village not far from Niort, whilst the horses were being changed, I remarked a quarry of fine stones in which men were working. Jumping out of the coach I took a small piece of rock and brought it back. It turned out to be a very hard limestone, or rather marble with delicate colored veins. What little I knew of mineralogy was placed at the service of my new friends. I told them that France was full of fine marble, that all the different marbles used in the construction of the church of the Madeleine in Paris were French, that not a particle of foreign material was used for building that splendid monument, etc. The whole time we spent together was taken up with friendly talk and I was sure these men would never abuse the clergy. In the United States this is the rule, but in France it was a surprise and a novelty.

Wherever I talked to men of the same class, I invariably met with courtesy and respect. There was an immense difference between their conduct ten years previous and their present demeanor. And this con-

tinued to increase until the downfall of Louis Philippe and after. In 1848 when a new republic was proclaimed, the behavior of the mob was very different from that in 1830. Not only did they not attack religion as formerly, but they called on the clergy to bless their trees of liberty, to inaugurate any new enterprise of their own, such as the launching of ships, the starting of new railroads, etc. The republic went even further. It granted liberty of instruction to Catholic congregations, not excepting the Jesuits.

But I am going too fast. We must come back to the time of which I was speaking. In 1837 I saw that the happy change of which I just spoke concerned not only the lower classes, but included even the educated part of the nation. At that time, I had come back from a sojourn of two years in Rome, and remained in Paris the three last months of 1837, and the greater part of 1838. The progress of religion had been going on steadily since 1835, and I was greatly surprised at what I saw in Paris. The change dates from the establishment of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul by Ozanam, and from the first preaching in Notre Dame by Lacordaire and Father de Ravignan. But this improvement extended to many young men who had not been influenced by the one or the other. The chief cause was the fact that religious indifference had taken the place of the former hatred of religion.

During the time I remained in Paris I was occupied in studying the sciences, and I was directed by my superiors not only to follow the courses of mathematics, physics, and chemistry taught by Fathers Moigno, Charles Aubert, and Lejariel in our house in the Rue du Regard, but likewise to assist at the public lessons

given at the Sorbonne and Collège de France by such men as Poisson, Pouillet, Dumas, Savart, Ballard, and others. I was not, however, prevented from listening occasionally to other teachers, such as Messrs. L'Herminier, Tissot, Lenormant, Boissonade, and young Ampère. I had consequently the best opportunity to become acquainted, not only with the highest exponents of science and literature in Paris, but also of the young men who went in crowds to those public courses of instruction. By going a quarter of an hour before the professor began, I could hear these young men talk, which they did freely, but always in an undertone according to rule. I was very much surprised to find out that the exterior appearance of the young men was very different from what it was in 1832 when I saw them for the first time and was disgusted by their appearance.

Five years had sufficed to produce an enormous change. The students were no longer a gathering of scapegraces, but men intent on learning Their dress was decent and their language correct. But the most remarkable feature of their intercourse with each other was that while they often spoke of religion, their tone was gentlemanly and correct. I was dressed like the other students, so that they knew nothing of my clerical character. They spoke openly and did not seem to mind who heard them. I remember well a long conversation between two of them, which I heard while waiting for M. Savard, whose lessons on acoustics I always attended with pleasure. One day when I arrived these two young men were conversing near me, and I heard every word of the conversation. One of them, the younger, appeared to have some strong

objections against Christianity and he expressed them in cogent language but without any of the old time abuse.

"You must confess," he said to his friend, "that the doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries is not only unpalatable, but altogether absurd when human nature is considered. When I am injured, I must not only feel it, but resent it and retaliate. Not to do so would be to abjure my natural feelings of manhood. A religion which commands the contrary cannot be accepted by any man worthy of the name." And he continued the same line of argument for five minutes or more. Christians know the answer to such objections, but the second young man who tried his best to reply to it was not a Christian as the remainder of the conversation evidently proved. He appeared to admire Christianity without believing in it and he did all he could to find reasons in its favor without knowing the purport of its doctrine.

"You are mistaken," he answered, "if you think that the Gospel obliges us to renounce our natural instincts. People who always stick to the letter and cannot dive into the esoteric sense, may do so. The forgiveness of injuries required by the Christian religion is unnatural only on the surface. At bottom, it leaves us free to follow our bent, when it is not evidently criminal. By the proclamation of that precept, the Christian religion only requires that we should act with prudence, discretion and a serious attention to our interest. If as soon as you are injured, you show your resentment, you defeat your own purpose, expose yourself to all the consequence of open enmity, and will soon repent of having acted rashly. That this is the

true doctrine, St. Paul is the witness when he says, ' If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he be thirsty, give him to drink; for doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.' "

This young man was not a safe expounder of Scripture, though he quoted St. Paul correctly. But was it not remarkable that the French should come to a serious consideration of difficulties of which they had never before condescended to think except as fair subjects of jokes and sneers? I seldom, however, heard any discussion among them so pointed and suggestive as this one. But I often heard remarks on religion which denoted a remarkable change among them. The same spirit was also occasionally visible in the lessons which they received on literature, on philosophy, on science, even though religion was very seldom mentioned in scientific lectures. Let me give you one or two incidents.

During the winter and spring of 1838 M. Lerminier lectured on " International Law during the Fourteenth Century." He constantly branched off on the slightest pretext, according as he thought he could elicit applause by something less dry than the one assigned by his programme. For he was extremely fond of popular favor, and often appeared to me ridiculous in that regard. There was nothing so funny in my eyes as to see him draping himself in his gorgeous cloak, at the end of an eloquent tirade, in order to enjoy to the full the little vanity there is in listening to public approval, and in being greeted by a thunder of applause. I never, however, went to his course precisely to enjoy a laugh at his expense; but he had invariably more than twelve hundred intelligent listeners and it was profitable to me to see how they acted.

On one occasion he was speaking, not on international law, but on public opinion during the fourteenth century, and he descanted on the freedom of thought already visible in France. Rabelais had not yet appeared and he was predestined to see the light only two centuries later. Still, Gallic sarcasm was, as early as the fourteenth century, active and caustic, and the learned professor read us long passages from a pamphlet written by an author whose name I have entirely forgotten. Was it authentic, or had M. Lerminier himself composed it for our edification? None of his auditors could tell, and the style though quaint and rather archaic did not appear to me to bear the type of that age.

But this was of little consequence in the eyes of the lecturer. The young men who came in crowds to hear him were all ardent Liberals. They boisterously applauded him most frequently, because he was himself one of the leaders in the Liberal camp. His eloquence, in my opinion, was rather frothy, but his young and impulsive hearers were perhaps the more pleased on that account. Now until that moment a Liberal was almost always a scoffer at religion. M. Lerminier had not yet perceived that there had been a change lately in that " public opinion " of which he was speaking. In politics the young men in 1838 continued to long for a republic and they openly despised the monarchy of Louis Philippe, Thiers and Guizot. But as to religion, indifference had brought them to show only apathy when the subject was introduced. Nay, some of them began to feel a secret leaning for the Faith they had lost.

On one occasion the professor read a passage from a

fourteenth century author which was a violent satire on religion, particularly on monks and nuns. The lecturer had warned us before he began that he was going to prove that Voltaire had many predecessors in France, even before the era of Rabelais. When he had finished reading he was so sure of the usual applause that he draped himself in his ample cloak trimmed up with fur and large tassels in front, and placing his hand on his heart dramatically whilst his right hand rested on the desk, he waited with his head up, and his eyes turning slowly round to take in his whole audience. After a moment of ominous silence a little clap was heard in a distant part of the hall. It was followed by a dead silence. M. Lerminier fared no better when he later became a Conservative and advocated the July monarchy. The disorder only increased, and he was forced to give up lecturing.

I was listening on one occasion to a lesson on Latin literature from the lips of M. P. F. Tissot. This gentleman during the First French Revolution had been a Jacobin, a member of the celebrated *Club des Cordeliers* over which Danton presided. He fortunately escaped the guillotine which threatened him on several occasions. Tired at last of revolutionary troubles, he turned toward ancient literature for which he had a taste in his youth. Through the protection of Fouché and François of Nantes he acted, during the First Empire, as a substitute for the poet Delille, and at the latter's death became Professor of Latin poetry in the Collège de France. When the Duke of Berry was assassinated the Bourbons deprived him of this office, on account of his having been a Jacobin. It was restored to him, however, by Louis Philippe after the Revolution of 1830.

This man was not likely to become a great advocate of religion. His author was Virgil and the best things he ever wrote were translations and commentaries of this great poet. When I entered the hall he was explaining the second book of the Æneid, and describing the sudden apparition of Venus to her son, Æneas, during the sack of Troy. He showed with exquisite taste the beauties of the celebrated passage in which the goddess of love addresses her son, and bids him flee from danger. He made us remark that here she is only a mother and in her words there is nothing to indicate that she is too often the prompter of lust.

"Gentlemen, however great a poet Virgil was, he was after all a pagan, and could not have even an inkling of the feelings which spring naturally in the bosom of a Christian mother; particularly when this mother is that of Christ Himself. When young I wrote some verses in which the Holy Virgin addresses her Son in a moment of danger. You may not be displeased to listen to them." Then he read a poem of more than fifty lines in which there were touches of the most moving and endearing motherly affection. I was greatly surprised because I was not aware of the reputation M. Tissot enjoyed as a Christian. But I was still more astonished when at the end of the reading a thousand students of the Quartier Latin applauded him.

About the same time several French ecclesiastics of note were giving lectures on theology at the Sorbonne, Holy Scripture, Christian Eloquence, etc. A course of *Hautes Etudes Théologiques* had been inaugurated during the reign of Charles X and continued under Louis Philippe. Rome, I think, had not been consulted on the subject, and Monseigneur de Quélen and his

successors in the archiepiscopal see of Paris never gave their sanction to this State establishment. Some of the professors, however, were men of talent. I never heard that any of them entertained false opinions on ecclesiastical subjects. They were, no doubt, Gallicans. But until the Vatican Council the Gallican doctrines were not openly condemned by any direct dogmatic decree; and the professors of the new Sorbonne were after all respectable men. M. Guillon, one of the most renowned among them, had been made a bishop *in partibus* of Morocco, and M. Maret also received the same honor.

Before 1830 and somewhat later, the professors of theology, scripture, and pulpit eloquence, had no other hearers than a few young men who wished to enter the ecclesiastical state. The young men who followed the courses of medicine, law, or letters, for many years felt little inclined to enter the halls of theology, and listen to the expounders of Sacred Scripture and patristic literature. But about the time I was in Paris and even somewhat earlier a great change took place among lay students which gave still more hope of a revival of religion among them. They began to flock to some of those courses of theological lectures. M. Frère particularly always saw hundreds of them in his class-room when he expounded the doctrine of the Church on the origin of man. The title of his theme was, *L'homme connu par la révélation*, and his whole course was afterwards published in book form and comprised two octavo volumes.

His splendid commentary on the first chapters of Genesis must have made a deep impression on the young men who came to hear him. Many of them must have studied at the same time the various branches

of Natural History which were then taught at the Jardin des Plantes by such men as Cuvier, Brongniart, de Jussieu and others.

The hope of a Christian revival in France was further strengthened by the considerable number of men great in science who at that time were uncompromising Catholics or, if Protestants, at least Christians of the supernatural type. There was Cauchy, considered as the greatest mathematician in Europe, who believed and practised with the simplicity of a child all the truths and precepts of Catholicism. There was Ampère the Elder, acknowledged as one of the greatest discoverers in physical science, yet professing his admiration for everything connected with the Church in which he was born. There was Biot, likewise one of the leaders in physical theory, always before this time respectful toward Catholicism, but who about this time again performed all the duties of religion. There was Leroy, a great geometrician, who for many years presided over the Ecole Polytechnique, a Christian of Christians, who, far from concealing his religion, had placed on his working table a large crucifix, so that the students who went to his room for advice and correction, might not remain in ignorance of his religious convictions. The leading chemist of the age, M. Dumas, who is still alive, and has lately taken a bold stand against the modern " leaders of thought " who pretend that religion and science must stand apart, or rather be placed in antagonism to each other, was a convinced Catholic. These are but a few of the scientists who honored that period by their open advocacy of religion and belonged to the Catholic Church. Others were Protestants but professedly Christians, like the great Cuvier.

A new era was therefore dawning in France. It was to be feared, however, that this change would not last and grow. For, as yet, the least breath of opposition might extinguish the flickering flame, and prevent it from developing into a blaze. In fact, how many efforts had not been required to kindle it, on the part of many men of great talent such as Lacordaire and his friends; de Ravignan and some very able speakers of his order; Boutain, de Guerry, and Gratry among clergymen of a different type; public educators like Dupanloup, and finally thousands and thousands of zealous men and women applying all their energy to the re-establishment of the Faith among all classes of people, either in the highest ranks of society, or in the middle classes though with less success, or finally among the working people and the rural population. There is no exaggeration in saying that if we count the female religious orders among those who had devoted themselves to the work of regeneration, there were not less than two hundred thousand persons engaged in that holy enterprise. Yet so far, their mightiest efforts had only succeeded in bringing comparatively few to the loving embrace of the Church. The success had been of a purely individual character. The mass of the nation had scarcely been touched. Until this took place, the permanency of the change was not secure. The least abatement of zeal on the part of the workers, or increase of energy on the part of the enemy, might put a stop to the progress or even change the advance into retrogression. This was the religious state of France when I left it in 1835, for a voyage and sojourn of two years in Italy; and in 1848 when I passed through before my departure to the United States.

CHAPTER XI

OF WOMEN IN FRANCE DURING THE RESTORATION AND THE REIGN OF LOUIS PHILIPPE

A VERY superficial observation of the religious and moral state of France at that time sufficed to convince me that in general the women had been but slightly influenced by the prevailing infidelity. Most of them continued firm believers in the mysteries of faith, active promoters of religion in their families and in society, and true patterns of the highest piety and most active benevolence. They moved, spoke, and acted as if they were still living in a mediæval country, as if the Ages of Faith had not disappeared. Had not this been the case, France would have ceased to be a Christian country and, humanly speaking, there would not have been any hope of the revival of religion. Let me introduce my readers to a few of my Christian acquaintances at this time.

The first noble family which comes to my memory was originally neither from Brittany nor Vendée; they were from Burgundy, but they had adopted Nantes as their place of permanent residence, and they had of course been adopted into the brotherhood of the Vendean gentry. Their name was de Suyrot. It was in 1834 that I first became acquainted with Mme. de Suyrot. She and her husband were living in a roomy and comfortable cottage in the midst of a large and

flowery garden to which the only access from the outside was through a narrow alley leading from the Rue St. Clément. They had not been blessed with children. I had just been appointed second curate in that parish, and for a long time before had known the peaceful and religious character of the inhabitants. I think I have already said that the population clustering around the church comprised two classes of people; the nobility and the poor.

A great number of noble families lived in the neighborhood in comfortable circumstances, none of them very rich. They were all faithful Christians and always ready to come to the relief of their poor brethren. These were chiefly mechanics and retailers on a very small scale. The servants employed in well-to-do families were all of them women or girls. I do not believe that in that part of the parish you could have found a single household, even of the noble class, enjoying the advantage of a coach and a pair of horses. There was, therefore, no *livrée*, as it was called in France, nay, no male servants of any sort. It was a delightful little world in which I was moving. The nobility had nothing of that overbearing character which has generally been attributed to them in books of modern French history. But if their salons and boudoirs were not remarkable for the splendor of the furniture, the company of both the lady and her husband was always most pleasant and refined, because, besides the education they had received, true politeness and good breeding came to them naturally, and as it were by right of birth from a long line of ancestors. Add to this that the religious feeling which was never absent spread over their manners a perfume of elegance unknown to those

who draw their good breeding mainly from the power of money.

I had been but a few weeks in the parish and knew Mme. de Suyrot only from having seen her in church, when I met her one day in the street near the alley which led to her dwelling. I raised my hat to her. She returned the salute by a slight courtesy, and pointing to the little path which led between two high walls, she asked me if I never passed in that direction. "Occasionally," I replied "to shorten my way when going to the cemetery," which was in fact in view from the end of the alley, "but I did not know, Madame, that you felt a liking for the same road." She laughed and protesting that she did not intend to bury me so soon, she brought me with her to the garden gate which she opened with a pass-key and introduced me into the cottage.

It was a bright day and the sunlight spread over the little salon a flush of cheerfulness and warmth. M. de Suyrot, whom we found alone, stretched at length on a sofa, rose when we entered and welcomed me good-naturedly to his house. He was tall, well made, a little stout and showed at his button-hole the cross of St. Louis. He had been a colonel in the army of the elder Bourbons, but had thrown up his commission at the accession of Louis Philippe whom he often called a usurper. The lady went to her room for a moment to take off her bonnet and her shawl, but directly returned with a big distaff in her hand; and seating herself on a low chair near her husband, she began to spin diligently and to use her tongue. I was first a little surprised because ladies of her rank very seldom used the distaff, that primitive instrument of our

ancestors. It gave me great pleasure to see her thus occupied, particularly because her conversation was at the same time animated and interesting. She began by giving a short account of their history.

The Suyrots were from Burgundy, I should have said Franche-Comté; which was settled by Burgundians as well as the other province called Bourgogne in modern times. They were in fact from the neighborhood of Besançon; they had spent there a great part of their lives and there also they had married. But the attachment of both to the elder Bourbons attracted them to Nantes where M. de Suyrot had many friends In his conversation, M. de Suyrot, like the old nobility in general, was careful and uneffusive. They were extremely prudent and seldom spoke of political matters, least of all of the Legitimist plots in which I knew some of them had been concerned. They never abused others; and there is no need of saying that, when they disapproved of either measures or men, their language was always polite and dignified. The abuse heaped on noblemen by the Liberals, so called, was often coarse; but this was to be expected because they had received a very different education, and the society in which they moved was far from being equally refined.

My conversation with M. and Mme. de Suyrot lasted but a short time, as it was only a sort of introduction. When I rose to depart, Mme. de Suyrot bade me farewell saying; "The ice is broken, *mon cher abbé*, and I hope you will stop here every time you go to the cemetery, or even when you do not go there. We always dine here at two o'clock, according to the old fashion, and whenever you arrive about that time of day, you

will find a seat and plate for you. The sooner you come, the better."

The first day of the following week I was with them. After dinner, when we were seated in the little salon, Mme. de Suyrot already plying her distaff while the gentleman and myself were occupied in discussing a bottle of Burgundy, I directly engaged the conversation on a subject very interesting to me; "Madame, I admire you and the noble colonel here. But you will allow me to say with the frankness of a priest that you seem to lead a rather idle life. Speaking as a friend, please tell me what you do all day long. You, Madame, I suppose have not always the distaff in your hands. As to *M. le Colonel*, I am sure that he is not satisfied with going on the sly to see his friends and plot with them against his majesty Louis Philippe. I ask these questions, not through curiosity, but I have just arrived and am anxious to do a little good in the parish. I see much misery all around. I know that some excellent people, like yourself, do all they can to assuage this suffering. But my knowledge is only vague; I see that all the noble families of the parish follow so closely the advice of the Gospel that indeed their left hand does not appear to know what is done by the right. I would like to know more than your own left hand does." In these or similar words, I opened the conversation.

Mme. de Suyrot spoke before her husband and having protested that she was not only not offended by the boldness of my words, but rather liked it, she informed me of many details hitherto unknown to me. I learned that all the noble families of the neighborhood, even those who were far from being rich, were very active in their

benevolence for the poor. It is true, they seldom went in person to see them, and thus very often the poor knew not from whom they received help. But the Daughters of Charity appointed for that part of the town were the general dispensers of their alms. From the time of Napoleon those admirable Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul had several houses in the city, and through them private charity was dispensed. I was glad to know this because I had already blundered in what I had myself tried to do for the poor in my little sphere.

After my appointment as *vicaire* of St. Clément's I knew that persons in distress would apply to me for aid. I followed the usual custom of the priests of Nantes, which consisted in giving little scraps of paper addressed to some baker or butcher with whom I had previously made arrangement. A few days before my visit to M. de Suyrot a sad case of distress came to my knowledge, which with my slender means I could not relieve. There was in the city an association of rich and influential ladies called *Dames de Charité* and I thought immediately that they were the proper persons to apply to. I was led to do so because St. Vincent de Paul had acted similarly in such cases. In France these Dames de Charité have always had the reputation of being associated with the Daughters of Charity. This was true to a certain extent even under Louis Philippe; but the connection between the two was very much closer now than in the days of St. Vincent de Paul. When public order was re-established by Napoleon and the Sisters of Charity could reopen their houses, the Dames de Charité also came forward, but unfortunately politics greatly modified the methods

of the organization. Under the elder Bourbons a great number of them must have been Legitimists. Under Louis Philippe the majority in Nantes were Orleanists and belonged to the rich *bourgeoisie* which then ruled France. These various changes were natural, because since the time of St. Vincent de Paul the Dames de Charité did not rely only on their own means and those of their friends to whom they applied, but in course of time the government of the whole State or of the cities yearly gave large sums which were dispensed in charity through that association, which thus became mixed up with politics.

When I had made up my mind to apply to the Dames de Charité I learned that the application must be made to the lady president of the association and that she was the wife of one of the first officials of the city. I had fallen into the hands of a bourgeois family of the Philippist persuasion, as they say in this country. I thought first of withdrawing from the attempt, but the very awkwardness of the position tempted me to go on, because I was sure that some funny and strange incident would happen. Her residence was in the midst of the fashionable quarter at the West End. When I arrived I found a large house of fine architectural proportions, surrounded with extensive grounds perfectly well laid out, a circumstance very unusual in Nantes at that time. A prim and demure young girl answered the bell, opened the door and on the presentation of my card introduced me into a splendid parlor. None of the richest houses belonging to noble families in St. Clément's parish could compete with it in luxury and taste. I had written on the back of my card that I was a clergyman belonging to St. Clément's.

The lady made me wait at least half an hour. Finally she arrived. I had remained on my feet all the time; looking first at some oil paintings and statuettes, from which I turned away very soon on account of their improper character—these were then universal in France among that class of people. I then found something very interesting, for one of the windows opened on the beautiful basin of the Loire, just west of the Salorges, almost in front of Trentemoult and Indrette. After the lady had motioned to me to take a richly embroidered chair and had seated herself on a luxurious sofa, she said, holding my card in her hand; "Please tell me, sir, what purpose brought you here from that far-away district of St. Clément." I answered that I came for charity, which was natural enough in a priest addressing *une dame de charité.* She said at first that I had made a mistake in applying to her; if she was president of the association, she had nothing to do with particular cases in the parish of St. Clément. Then I asked her to whom I should apply; and she answered to the Dames de Charité living in that district. On my replying that I did not know any and would be thankful if she gave me some names, she said she could not remember at that moment but I would find it out by looking into the official almanac of the city.

Seeing that she was about to retire, I ventured to say that if I gave her this trouble, it was because the association, of which she was president, was very little known, at least in my district and I would be extremely obliged to her to let me know something of its methods and way of acting, because I was surrounded in my parish with very poor people whom I found myself unable to assist. She then condescended to explain

some of the intricacies of the system which I cannot recollect at this time, but which convinced me that royalist quarters such as St. Clément's, had little to expect from them, because the means of the State charitable institutions in France, being in Louis Philippe's time in the hands of Orleanist ladies, little favor could be hoped for for the Catholic poor.

This ended my unsatisfactory pilgrimage in search of some of the State money for Christ's poor. I bowed and left. It must be said, however, that when the Daughters of Charity applied for help to the Dames de Charité, they were far better received than the priests who seldom or never went to them. It was always understood that the Sisters and the Dames formed two associations which had been connected since the days of St. Vincent. The only means for clergymen to reach the Dames was through the Sisters, and this information was all I gained from my visit.

Mme. de Suyrot said she was very busy with the poor; still she seldom went to see them in their houses. Everything was done through the agency of the religious women established in the neighborhood. The Daughters of Charity were not the only ones engaged in the good work; several convents near M. de Suyrot's house were also engaged in it. Opposite the little alley I have mentioned there was a large community of Visitation nuns. They occupied a great part of an old Carthusian monastery. It had been sold during the First Revolution, and the Visitandines had later purchased the church and several large buildings used formerly by the monks. They had turned it into a boarding school for young ladies, and at that time the highest families of Brittany and Vendée sent their girls to be educated

there. The superioress of the house was Mme. de la Ferronays, the aunt, I suppose, of the lady mentioned in the *Récit d'une Soeur*. This would explain the qualities of her heart and mind, and also the tender piety which distinguished her as well as the whole La Ferronays family. She was strongly attached to the elder Bourbons, and greatly interested in politics. M. Charles Vrignaud, a worthy priest, who was the private secretary of M. de Guérines, the Bishop of Nantes, used to say that whenever he wanted to obtain reliable news of the political world in Paris with regard to the prospects of the Legitimists or about the squabbles between the parties then in power, he went to see Mme. de la Ferronays. The poor lady could not help it; she received letters from all quarters and courtesy obliged her to answer them, chiefly because they were in general written by the highest, most chivalrous and most truly patriotic people of the country. Besides it was not her fault that her heart was devoted to the elder Bourbons. She had known them intimately during their prosperity, received favors from them and thought, perhaps wrongly but honestly, that the recovery of their throne was necessary for the well-being of the nation and even for the safety of religion and morality.

This was known generally in Nantes and even in a great part of the country where for many the name of La Ferronays was synonymous with honor and conscience. The Government of Louis Philippe was aware of it, and the authorities in Nantes kept their eyes on the Convent of the Visitation though they were afraid of annoying its distinguished inmates. In 1832, at the time of the foolish attempt of the Duchess of Berry, it became known that Charette had withdrawn from

the battlefield to Nantes, and was harbored by Mme. de la Ferronays in her house, or at least in that of their chaplain. The police did not dare to knock at the door of the convent but went early in the morning to a cottage contiguous to it in which the priest lived, and demanded instant admittance. This clergyman's name was Minot, and he had a great reputation in the neighborhood for his learning and polite manners, but chiefly for his zeal. When he gave instructions to the people in the neighborhood in the convent church where all were admitted, the large building could not contain the crowd. As soon as it was rumored about that M. Minot's house was invaded by the police, many neighbors began to gather, giving signs of being rather unfriendly to the early visitors. In the disorder that ensued, Charette escaped by scaling the wall of the next garden, and all the police could find of him was his vacant bed in a little alcove where he had spent the night. This explains why Mme. de Suyrot was so fond of this convent and of its noble superioress. She was often closeted with Mme. de la Ferronays. But the reader may be sure that it was oftener for some object of charity, than for politics.

The Visitation convent faced Mme. de Suyrot's cottage, that of the Ursulines being a few houses east of it on the Rue St. Clément. It was next to the parish church but back of it. To reach it from the street there was only a narrow alley, the same which led to Mme. de Suyrot's dwelling. They taught two schools; one very large, composed of little girls belonging to poor families; and another, much smaller, belonging to the *bourgeoisie*. The poor Ursulines, whose only means of support was their Academy, were far from being

rich. But they were extremely useful to charitable ladies such as Mme. de Suyrot on account of their large acquaintance with the poor of the parish. I knew the convent well, because one of the professors at the Petit Séminaire was its chaplain, and I sometimes went with him to the church.

My new lady friend was evidently a very busy person, and I congratulated her on her activity. When I left, she said; "You see, *mon cher abbé*, that in this parish you also can spend your spare money in many useful ways. But as the Ursulines and the Visitandines are cloistered you cannot go into their houses, except to the chapel, or to the grate in the parlor. I advise you to follow a different way of acting. You have two easy means of accomplishing your object without going to the Dames de Charité at the other end of town. You can go first to the Daughters of Charity. They are always accessible. They are in general our treasurers, and I often deal with them. They have also the advantage of drawing on the purse of the Dames de Charité who do some good through them. A second means is to make the acquaintance of ladies like myself who devote all their time to works of charity. You are too modest my dear friend. If I had not stopped you at the entrance of my alley, you would not have known even me. Put on a bolder face and speak to people that you see in church. Have you never heard of the two *demoiselles* de la Rochefoucauld? They are nuns of the lay order. Because they are not bored with any husband, as I am with the old colonel here, they can spend all their time either in the church, or in the dwellings of the poor. They are better acquainted with the parish than *Monsieur le Curé* himself. Besides

these golden hearted ladies there are many others who follow their example."

Colonel de Suyrot was a Legitimist, had taken part in the plot of the Duchess of Berry, and had to be very prudent afterwards. After the failure he took care of some poor fellows who had fled from the battlefield, many of them to Nantes, which they thought the best place of concealment. The majority of those who had fought at La Pénissière were young men from the city and particularly from the Petit Séminaire who could provide for themselves. But most of those who had distinguished themselves at Chène under Charette were young peasants, many of whom after the affair withdrew to Nantes, because they would have been apprehended had they returned to their villages. One of them, in fact, who had done so was caught and tried. It was proved that in the engagement he had killed some one of the soldiers sent against them by the Government. He was convicted as a murderer and executed. He died like a man, going to the scaffold in a fine green suit, which was the Legitimists' color, and crying out "*Vive Henri V.*" Under the circumstances Colonel de Suyrot at this time directed his charity mostly to the Bourbonist refugees in Nantes.

What I have said shows that in the third decade of the nineteenth century French women were very active in the field of charity and religion. But the same cannot be said of the men. In cities few of them went to church. Religion was dead in their hearts; and when this is the case morality seldom survives. There were, it is true, in the parish of St. Clément several gentlemen of the noble class actively charitable, who gave consoling examples of domestic virtue.

Still they formed only a small part of the male population. Even among them few approached the Sacraments. In 1835 at Easter only ten men in the whole parish, and about a hundred in the whole city, fulfilled their duty. I took special pains to ascertain this fact, both in St. Clément's and the other parishes of the city.

At Paris, M. Ozanam, it is true, had already given a happy impulse in a contrary sense by founding the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the movement has since taken large proportions. But in 1835 it had not yet reached Nantes. There was not a single Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in that city, and the small number of male communicants at Easter proved that Nantes was not an important religious centre as it was sometimes called.

Ever since Mme. de Suyrot had spoken of the *demoiselles* de la Rochefoucauld, I desired to become acquainted with them. I knew them by sight because they were often to be seen in church. I even knew their place of residence, which was just at the entrance to the small alley leading to the Ursuline convent. I sought an occasion to meet them; this was not difficult. I went sometimes to pray in the chapel of the Ursulines which was at the end of the alley, at the entrance to which they lived. At first I invariably found their door closed. Finally I met one of the sisters as she came out of their apartment at the corner which I had to pass. She stood with the door ajar to let me enter and I could not wish for a more opportune moment. "Mlle. de la Rochefoucauld, I think?" said I to the lady. "At your service, Monsieur l'Abbé," she replied; and as if she felt the same inclination to talk with me as I did to talk with her she opened the door and led

me to a little parlor which I will not call a salon, because it resembled the parlor of a small convent rather than a salon. As an introduction, I simply related to her the advice Mme. de Suyrot had given me to pounce upon the two sisters at the first opportunity and learn from them what charity was. "I am now an habitué," said I, "of Mme. de Suyrot's cottage and I admire what she does for the poor, though she seldom visits them. But she tells me that this is not the case with you, and as I have to visit the poor myself when they are sick, I intend to discover all your secrets that I may know how to treat the poor."

She smiled and she answered that she and her sister had no secrets and I was welcome to the knowledge which they did not obtrude on others but of which they made no concealment. "Quite the contrary," she added, "as we are not rich, our means are not equal to our good desires, and in order to increase our field of work we willingly place under the eyes of all our visitors what we do in order to induce them to help us. This is perhaps," she added with something of an arch smile, "to misunderstand the very clear precept of the gospel 'not to let our left hand know what the right does,' but M. le Curé, whom we consulted on the subject, said that this strict advice is good for the Pharisees who boast too much of their good deeds and of whom Christ spoke on that occasion."

"You increase my curiosity," I replied to her, "and I hope you will not keep me in suspense too long." Instead of answering she rose and opened a door which led from the parlor to a much larger apartment. A long table in the middle was covered with unfinished women's garments of every size and pattern. Along

the wall, all around, presses, of which she opened a few, were filled with other dresses all finished and ready for use; and from the ceiling a whole system of ropes served for drying old pieces of female apparel which had been repaired and cleaned. In my amazement I had not remarked that there was another lady in the apartment. This was her sister; she had been working at a corner of the table but now looked at me. I almost stumbled against her but had time to recover myself and began to apologize for my awkwardness. She laughed; but checking her hilarity, she said, as an excuse, that she always enjoyed the fun whenever some visitor entered this room for the first time. They always appeared bewildered, as if it was the strangest sight in the world.

"It is, Mademoiselle," I exclaimed. "As in the world you see everywhere the picture of selfishness, so here we have the spectacle of practical charity." "Ladies," I said afterwards, "you must allow me to ask you why you are not in a convent. You could almost jump from your rooms to those of the Ursuline community. It is true they deal more with teaching than with making dresses; but there are other orders around you which might suit you better, the Daughters of Charity, for instance. If those good Sisters do not generally manufacture the dresses themselves, they certainly handle them for the poor every day. Would not that suit you?"

I am unfortunately always blunt in my questions, too blunt perhaps. But I think I can say in extenuation that this bluntness is not in my case opposed to good humor; and it was certainly more to raise a smile on their pleasant countenances than to vex them that

I had indulged in this fit of curiosity. Contrary to my expectation, it raised a blush on both their faces. I had evidently trodden on delicate ground and I was going to apologize when on the sweet face of one of them—the youngest, a smile suddenly came which blended so harmoniously with the blush that I was amazed at the sight. It was a blending of modesty with good humor which was delightful to behold. Nothing I said could have offended her modesty; but I had slightly touched some secret of her conscience and that sufficed to produce the same effect as if I had uttered an unbecoming word. My offence was no doubt forgiven, since the smile had come like the rainbow after the shower and keeping my apology for myself, I waited for her to speak.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," she said at last, "my sister and myself had to follow the light that God gave us and instead of being in a convent we are plodding through the world, that is, through the streets of St. Clément's parish, which is indeed a world in itself, since it contains so many souls plunged in affliction and distress. It is true, however, that we are neither fish nor fowl, that is to say, neither nuns nor lay people. We are hovering on the limits of both countries and we hardly know to which of the two we belong and what name it is proper for us to take."

"Your name, ladies," said I, "is not difficult to find out; you both are the only real and genuine Dames de Charité in Nantes." Then I related briefly the story which the reader already knows. Before leaving, however, we agreed that whenever I met with poor women in need of clothes, I would send them to the little corner near the Ursuline convent. And thus I got from them

what I could not get from the rich lady at the other end of town.

My curiosity, nevertheless, was only half satisfied; so the next time I met Mme. de Suyrot I related what had happened and how I asked them why they were not in a convent. "Did you?" she exclaimed, as if I had trodden upon her foot. "You are a dangerous man, Monsieur l'Abbé, and I will be careful of what I shall say to you hereafter." "Why so?" I replied. "Because I have already remarked that you are extremely inquisitive and personal; too much so, and if one is not on his guard with you, *vous lui tirez les vers du nez*—you will make him say what he does not wish to say." "But Madame," I remarked, "it was only a joke on my part." "A bad joke, sir," she replied, "because you had the intention to draw from them the only secret of their lives."

Mme. de Suyrot appeared to be really angry, because when she was joking it soon appeared. "I am now sure," she said, "that you intend to be a Jesuit." I had never yet said a word to her on the subject. "That kind of people, everybody says, are always on the look-out for secrets, in order to plot in the dark for their ends. Have you ever read Pascal on the subject?" This set me at my ease, as I knew she hated Jansenism. "I am sorry to hear," I replied, "that you look for truth in the pages of that sour sectarian. But the Jesuits have nothing to do with this story. I am the only one concerned in it, and my conscience does not reproach me with any dark plot against those two excellent ladies. I am pleased to know, however, that they have a secret and only one, and as I am naturally curious, will you not tell me whether they ever thought of entering a convent?"

"You are a strange man," she replied, "when I charge you with being curious, you insist upon my betraying my secret. What will you do with it if I tell you?" "Do?" said I, "keep it to myself and help you keep it so that the ladies themselves will never suspect that I am acquainted with it."

All along Mme. de Suyrot was burning to let the cat out of the bag. She was a true woman and from the beginning had fixed the bait as fishermen do for gudgeons to bite at. From their youth these two ladies had felt two very strong inclinations; the first, to devote themselves to charitable works; the second, to enter a convent. The Visitation convent was just on the other side of the street, and their education and good breeding warranted the belief that they were well fitted to train girls of noble parentage. Mme. de la Ferronays, to whom they spoke of entering the convent, wished to receive them as novices. The name of La Rochefoucauld was even more noble than her own and it would be an advantage to her convent to have them as teachers.

The two ladies, however, did not wish to teach and preferred to work entirely for the poor. I saw no more suitable life than that of the Daughters of Charity. "You see, Monsieur l'Abbé," she said, "these two little birds have wings only for what is homely and humble. They could not perch like birds of paradise on the lofty branch of the tall tree to display their bright plumage. They are little wrens who build their nests twelve inches from the ground in the hole of a rock or in a hollow stump full of brown lichens or green mosses. Like the wren, also, they flee at the approach of man, keeping close to the earth or in sheltering bushes; it is only when

far away from their pursuer that they rise in the open air and alighting on the roof of a barn, sing the triumph of their humility."

This description delighted me on account of its truth, and I remembered the first wren's nest I had ever seen, when Renaud Richard made me stop near the entrance of his garden to look at a brood of these puny birds. "Madame," said I, "where have you learned natural history? I did not know that you were a zoologist and could describe birds as well as Buffon, if not better."

"Tut, tut," she replied, "what do you say of zoo. . . zoo. . ? I do not understand your big words taken from Hebrew and Greek, I suppose. As to natural history, if you mean by that the knowledge of the beautiful objects which the hand of God has scattered all around us, I have eyes to see them. All I know of Buffon is restricted to what I read when I was a little girl in a book called *Le Buffon de la jeunesse*; I found it a very dull book and it could not teach me as well as my own eyes. But I will tell you where I have learned to look at nature. It is in the *Devout Life* of St. Francis of Sales. I often read it, always with new pleasure, and I use an old edition in which the phraseology and spelling of the good Bishop of Geneva has been preserved. There is in that work plenty of what you call natural history, accurate or not, but always presented to your fancy so as to make you admire the goodness of God in everything He has created. I wonder if you have ever happened to fall on that golden treasure of the true and beautiful."

"Oh, yes Madame," I replied, "I have gone more than once through it. M. de Courson first put it in my hands; and now I do not wonder that you are so

proficient in zoology." I put a strong emphasis on this last word.

"There," she exclaimed, "you are still at your old trick of doing your best to puzzle and vex me; but I am not done with my tale and in order to get angry with you I must come back to it."

Then she related at full length how the *demoiselles* de la Rochefoucauld, having made up their minds to join the order of the Daughters of Charity, thought first of acquainting M. le Curé with their intention. M. Boyer was then a man nearly seventy years of age. He had studied his theology at the old Sorbonne, and was ordained a priest before the Revolution. He had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and had emigrated to Spain. On his return he was appointed to several positions of trust and finally was placed at the head of the congregation whose people I am now describing. His manners were not very refined; he talked very loudly, and often gesticulated outrageously. His knowledge of ecclesiastical science was of course extensive and accurate. But when he spoke of such subjects at table for instance, he never insisted on his opinions.

Thus for example, though I imagine he was a Gallican, as nearly all the French clergy were, I never heard him even allude to the four celebrated articles of Bossuet. He detested Jansenism, but this was not a controverted subject as it had been condemned. It is not, therefore, a matter of wonder that all good Christians venerated M. Boyer, and the most refined people of the city thought it an honor to have him at their tables. The highest nobility of Nantes, even out of his own parish, often invited him, and during the twelve

months I was with him, whenever he was invited, he saw to it that one of his assistants was also invited. I had therefore occasionally the pleasure of accompanying him. It was thus I became acquainted with the families of the Count de Marsan and the Count d'Elvas. If the high born were fond of M. Boyer, the humbler part of his flock were all strongly attached to him. I place the *demoiselles* de la Rochefoucauld among the humble because though they were truly high born, still they had cast their lot with the lowly. They were, as we know, the best workers in the parish in the department of charity, and as soon as they opened their minds to their dear pastor, he broke out in a storm of indignation. However, his excitement was soon at an end. A smile began to play on his lips.

"I will know very soon," he began, "what reason Mme. de la Ferronays has to whisper such a notion into your ears, in order to have you all to herself." "Mme. de la Ferronays" replied the elder sister, "did not suggest it to us, and we do not intend to join her community." "I see," he rejoined, "you are so near the Ursulines that from your dark alley you can enter their convent without anybody knowing it." "You are again mistaken, Monsieur le Curé; we never thought of the Ursulines; it is the Daughters of Charity that we intend to join." M. Boyer now felt that he was sure of victory. He made it clear that by continuing to do what they were doing they would be true daughters of charity; they would differ from them only in dress. "Besides, as to the vows of the Daughters of Charity, they are only simple vows which they renew every year. I can grant you the same privilege, being your confessor and knowing you so well. You are my main-

stays in this parish and must remain in it. I think it is the will of God."

At the end of the conversation Mme. de Suyrot said that this was the secret of the *demoiselles*. They were in fact nuns in disguise; but, she added, I must keep my promise never to speak of it unless I became a centenarian. At that age or a short time before I might unveil the secret with due precaution. " But you must never give to the *demoiselles* de la Rochefoucauld the slightest hint that you are acquainted with it."

To mention some other noble families in which religion and charity were tradition, let me recall the d'Elvas' and de Marsans'. The revenue of the first was said to amount to eighty thousand francs a year. They lived in a princely manner and spent the greater part of the year at their country seat, which I never saw; but they lived in Nantes from the beginning of November to the middle of April. They had only one child, a boy, though they had been married sixteen years; but to their great joy a girl was born to them during the time I was curate at St. Clément. I dined several times with them and was well acquainted with l'abbé Guyard, the preceptor of their boy. This priest, having no taste for the ministry though he was an excellent preacher, had become an instructor and chaplain in the University of France. Being obliged, as all other members of educational institutions by the *ordonnances* of Charles X in 1828, to sign a paper declaring that he did not belong to any religious community, he refused because he considered it a mean action as a kind of approval of the vexatious measures directed against the Jesuits. He consequently sent in his resignation and became a tutor in the d'Elvas' family.

The d'Elvas' were also very hospitable to other clergymen. I met at their house two Trappist monks, English born, who had been obliged to leave their monastery of La Melleraye in 1832 and were still with the d'Elvas' in 1835. They went subsequently to Ireland and were numbered among the founders of Mount Mellary's convent. At d'Elvas' house they taught the boy English. The little fellow was already quite proficient in that study, and his mother had often occasion to chide him at the table because he addressed questions in English of which M. le Curé and myself knew nothing. The lady was a spare little woman, apparently ten years younger than her husband, whose portly frame appeared still more bulky in comparison with her diminutive size. She was of a very retiring disposition. But for all that she could talk. No one could have suspected that she was a high born lady.

There was nothing commanding in her, and her chief characteristic was modesty and submission to her husband, simplicity and naturalness. All the virtues of a Christian woman adorned her life and proved the sincerity and genuineness of her piety. Every day she came to church with her husband, and it was only her natural timidity carried almost to the verge of scruple that prevented her from going every week to the altar as the Count used to do. I noticed the same mediæval simplicity and virtue in the two sisters of the Vendean Charette. Their way of life was that of holy recluses in their little cottage on the banks of the Erdre, and they seemed to have no other object in life than to pray for the soul of their late brother, the renowned chief of the Marais and the Bocage.

We now come to the women of the *bourgeoisie* and

of the *haut commerce* families. The wholesale merchants and the rich industrials, I have already said, for the most part were Liberals in politics and little troubled with religious convictions. With the ladies of this class I rarely or never came into contact and I had, therefore, no personal acquaintance with them.

The professional classes in France, i.e., the lawyers, physicians, journalists and the like, were not remarkable for their Christian zeal or religious convictions. I must say, however, that while the medical professors in the universities had the reputation of being materialists and unbelievers, many of the practising physicians were also practising Christians.

Besides the Poisson family in Pelerin, I must mention the Maisonneuves in Nantes. There were two of them; their sons studied with me at college. M. Blin, an old member of the Assemblée Constituante of 1789; M. Pellerin, a doctor of great reputation and a sincere Catholic; M. Legouais, brother of little Father Legouais who was so well known in New York; M. Richard, father of the coadjutor of the Archbishop of Paris; finally M. Sue, our family doctor, a relative, as it was said, of the celebrated novelist and anti-Jesuit writer, Eugene Sue; but the Nantes doctor was far from sharing in the opinions of the notorious author of the *Juif Errant*. All these gentlemen and many other physicians of Nantes were distinguished for their domestic virtues and their sincere attachment to religion. Their wives and daughters were worthy of the husbands. However, I never came closely in contact with them. With the lawyers I was much better acquainted. M. Lalier enjoyed the confidence of the public and was a pronounced Catholic. I hear that his son continues to

walk in his footsteps to this date. Among them, religion, as usual, was under the special guardianship of the mother.

I have much more to say of Madame Lebel, the wife of another notary. For a good many years the family lived opposite the house in which I was born and brought up. They occupied a flat on the third story; the notary had his study and office in the rear, but Madame Lebel's little salon and working room were in front, just across the street from my own room, situated also on the third story. She spent almost the whole day with her four little boys; she had no girls, but the little fellows were as demure as if they were of the other sex. We naturally became acquainted and I was invited to call on the four boys. I was about fourteen. I do not remember that in all my life I saw a woman's face sweeter and fuller of motherly affection. She doted on her little boys as they did on her. What astonished me was that she never scolded, not even with her looks. Even in our own family, scolding seemed to be one of the leading virtues of the mother.

Madame Lebel had found the secret of obtaining all she wished from her boys without using the rod. She spent nearly the whole time with her children. Her husband was always hard at work, even in the long winter evenings, because, besides being a notary in good practice, he was also a theoretical farmer and wrote and published treatises on manures, draining, rotation of crops and the like. She evidently felt no inclination for visiting or being visited; she scarcely left the house, and I very seldom saw people in her salon. Still, she was not morose, far from it, and I felt greatly interested in the stories she related to her boys and to

me. She had not sent her children to school before their First Communion. Her boys, consequently, could not learn bad manners and bad language from rough fellows in school. To give them needful exercise, she sent the boys to the *grand Cours* every afternoon. In September and October she invariably took them with her to the country. I often heard her recommend to her children great respect for what is holy, and serious attention in reciting their prayers and learning their catechism. I often saw her at Mass early in the morning, and I have no doubt that she went there every day.

Practices of piety were still in honor in France among many ladies of the *bourgeoisie*. At St. Croix, my own parish, Masses were said regularly on week-day mornings from six to eleven-thirty o'clock. I was in a position to be informed about the attendance at these Masses. All of them were well attended by women of the burgher class, except the eleven o'clock Mass, which was too late for most of them. Surely all were not as pious and as devoted to their motherly duty as Madame Lebel was; but the greatest number of them were sincere Christians. They showed it not only by going to Mass, but also by crowding around the confessionals almost every day of the week. For the life of priests in Nantes was not as easy as it is in general for us in New York. It was not on Friday and Saturday evenings alone that they sat in the confessional, after hearing a few perhaps in the afternoon. All of those who were actively employed in the parishes soon after their Mass went to the confessional, and sat there until all the people in waiting had been heard, so that all took their breakfast pretty late in the morning. After their

dinner, which they took in common, and a game of checkers, of cards, or of billiards, they all repaired to the church again where they found a new set of penitents. As the men do not go to confession, the women must have been very pious.

There was another woman also belonging to the lesser *bourgeoisie* of whom I will briefly speak. Her name was Madame Durand; she had three daughters and two or three boys. The daughters were at the head of a fine millinery establishment on which the whole family lived handsomely. Their domestic affairs were carried on in the first and second flats of the same house where Madame Lebel resided. As I became at an early age a great friend of the eldest boy, who was a couple of years my senior, I knew the family almost as well as I did my own. Madame Durand was found everywhere, as well inside as out of doors, being welcome at all her neighbors' houses. She was a great little busybody, but her heart was that of a true Christian woman. She was a true peacemaker, as she often proved. Her daughters were estimable young women, the mainstay of their parents, who at the same time took a deep interest in the education of their younger brothers.

The same custom prevailed among the other old dames who sold cheese in the same neighborhood, and lived together in a dilapidated and rickety house contiguous to the Bouffey (the celebrated mediæval castle turned into a prison of which I have already spoken). My mother occasionally sent me there instead of to the stands to buy her cheese, because it could be gotten there fresher than at the market. The walls of their apartments were often covered with religious prints, and a holy water font hung over their beds. Never

was there a word said among them turning religion into ridicule or openly blaspheming it, as I hear is now the case in France among the laboring classes in cities.

There was in Nantes a remarkable class of young women who deserve a more extensive mention. A strange custom existed among the bakers of the city. They always employed as servants girls from the *bourg de Batz* near Guérande. These people were said to be descended from the Saxons that Charlemagne had settled throughout his Empire, to punish them for their obstinacy. The *bourg de Batz* people were all fair-haired, of a ruddy complexion, and tall. They had fine physical features, altogether different from those of their French neighbors. They boasted of their foreign origin, married only among themselves, kept sacredly the dress their ancestors had always worn, and followed customs which had been consecrated by centuries. Beside the French language which they spoke well (much better in fact than the peasants of their neighborhood) they used the Celtic idiom of the Bretons, which they said they had adopted when they came from Germany. They were as fervent Christians as the Celtic Bretons. The village in my time contained an homogeneous population of about twelve hundred people; and it was always from them that the bakers of Nantes chose their servants.

The bakers had no wagons to distribute their bread, but packed the loaves in large baskets placed on the heads of the *bourg de Batz* girls, who carried them to their destiny. They walked with a dignity and grace seldom surpassed by the ladies of the upper classes. If seen in the streets of New York they might have been taken for actresses, for their dress was most fantastic, and

their attitude might have been called dramatic if it had not been entirely simple and natural. It was always a pleasure for me to receive the loaves destined for our house.

In all Nantes no girls were more respected for their virtue, and this respect was founded on the fact that everybody knew their profound and sincere religious feelings and their deep piety and love of God. Whenever a prince or princess of the Bourbon family came to Nantes during the Restoration, among the deputation of citizens and officials who were admitted into their presence there were always some of those Saxon girls dressed in their most elaborate garments, who went to honor royalty and were received as if they belonged to a noble class whose history in France went back to the Carlovingian epoch. To grace the occasion some of their brothers and relatives came from the *bourg de Batz* to accompany them, and the costume of the men was even more elaborate and costly than the dress of the women. I have seen a deputation of this kind presented to the Duchess of Angoulême, the daughter of Louis XVI, when she visited Nantes in 1823, during the Spanish war undertaken by France for putting down the rebellion which had well nigh deposed Ferdinand VII.

On such state occasions the *Dames de la Halle* were also invited to do homage to royalty. All the market women of the city, if I mistake not, belonged to these. They still formed a kind of guild with its rules and customs. They were even connected in a way with the *Compagnons du Devoir*, an association of workingmen which was spread all over France, and occasionally broke out into a quarrel with those of their craft who

had not joined them. But this was the only reprehensible thing in their organizations. Socialism had not yet appeared among them, and they were not engaged in any war against society. They wished only to protect themselves in a lawful way. In every city the chief of the *Dames de la Halle* was the great provider of the *Compagnons* newly arrived in the town. She was therefore called *la Mère des Compagnons*. When any of her protégés were in distress she became a mother indeed and provided for their wants. It was her duty to see that they found work; she was therefore in constant communication with the manufacturers and tradesmen of the city, over whom she always exercised a great influence.

With all this the *Dames de la Halle* were but ordinary women, without education, and many of them did not know how to read. Their language was often coarse and furnished with a rich vocabulary of uncomplimentary terms which they used rather more frequently than there was any need for.

But with all they had golden hearts and never remained deaf to the calls of charity. The poor people who applied to them seldom met with a refusal. I once saw a virago engaged in a dispute with a mean man who wanted to buy her fruits for nothing, and at the same moment stuffing the wallet of a poor woman with vegetables. It greatly amused me to watch the fire in her furious eyes and the contortions of her lips as well as the gesticulations of her hands while she filled the poor woman's bag. The market women's charity was mostly prompted by religion. They attached a great importance to confession because they felt its necessity on account of their irascible tempers.

Some moralists, it is true, might think their conversion a sham because their fits of anger rarely failed to return. But I can assure them that the poor women were truly repentant and kept their tempers, at least for a time.

Last of all we must say a word about the seamstresses. All that I saw of them suggested to me the sweetest fragrance of pure virtue. Modesty, resignation, uncomplaining submission to their hard lot, was universal among them. Their fate was hard indeed. Their wages were so low that they could hardly live in the best times. When there was difficulty to find work they were starving; and at the end of their lives, the public hospital would have been their only refuge if they had not found many compassionate souls to assuage their sufferings and especially the ubiquitous Daughters of Charity. I could fill many pages with heartrending stories, especially of girls who fell early victims to lung disease and lingering illness, the effect of privation and hard work. In my time, unfortunately, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul had not yet spread beyond Paris and perhaps Lyons. And although from all that has been recounted in these pages charity was alive everywhere in France, there was no systematic organization sufficient to meet all cases of distress. Many of these poor girls were swept away without any care being taken of them. But they all went to heaven because in all France there were no purer models of Christian virtue than these patient girls.

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